A

Short and Easie

METHOD

OF

PRAYER.

Which every one may learn and practise with great Facility, and thereby arrive, in a little time, to high degrees of Christian Perfection.

Singularly useful to all Persons who seek God in Sincerity.

By Madam Guion.

To which are added,

Two Letters written by F. *Falconi* and *Fr. de Sales* on the same Subject.

Done out of French.

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BODLEIAN
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TO THE

English Reader.

THE Author of this Excellent Treatiſe hath had ſo large a Share in the mighty Perſecutions which of late Years have been rais'd againſt that they call *Quietiſm*, and hath been ſo much conſidered by ſome of the moſt celebrated Pens of the Age in their warm Diſputes on that Occaſion, that her Name at this time is become deſervedly Famous almoſt all *Europe* over.

To give any tolerable Account either of her Life or Doctrine, of her extraordinary Piety, or of the manner of the Divine Communications to her, and to others thro' her; of the Succeſs ſhe had in introducing the Method and Practice of Internal Prayer, and of the unnatural Oppoſition ſhe

met with from ſome eminent Prelates on that account; and in a ſpecial manner, becauſe of the ſtrict and ſpiritual Friendſhip ſhe ſtood engag'd in with the ſingularly Pious and Learned A. B. of *Cambray*, which indeed was the principal Cauſe of her long and cloſe Impriſonment for ſeveral Years.

I ſay, to give any juſt and competent Relation of theſe, and ſeveral other Particulars of the like Importance, would certainly make the *Preface* too large to bear a ſuitable Proportion to the Book it ſelf: and therefore I chuſe rather to ſuſpend it altogether at this time, hoping the Publick may have full Satisfaction as to this matter afterward.

But as to the Subject here treated of, namely, *Prayer*, 'tis great Pity that this manner of it, which is call'd *Mental* or *Internal*, is ſo very little known, nay, ſo univerſally neglected and contemned in the World, and that not only by the Generality of Chriſtians, but even by thoſe whoſe Character and Profeſſion ought to be founded and eſtabliſh'd in the living Practice of it.

For want of the right Underſtanding of *Internal Prayer*, Men have generally

not find him, ſoraſmuch as he ſeeks him where he is not; and therefore it is added, ye ſhall die in your Sin. *But he that will truly take the Pains to ſeek him* in his own Heart, *ſincerely forſaking Sin, that he may draw near unto him, ſhall infallibly find him.*

A great many Perſons have fancied Prayer *and* Devotion *to be things ſo very frightful and extraordinary, that they thought it was but in vain to labour to acquire them, deſpairing ever to be able to compaſs them. But as the* Difficulty *which one apprehends to be in any thing, maketh him deſpair of being able to ſucceed in it, and at the ſame time ſtifleth his Deſire of undertaking it; ſo on the other hand, when one propoſes to himſelf a thing as advantageous, and which is eaſie to be obtained, he ſets about it with Pleaſure, and carries it on with Reſolution: This is what hath obliged us to diſcover both the Advantage and Facility of this Method. O! were we but perſwaded of the* Infinite Goodneſs of God *toward his poor Creatures, and of the Deſire that he hath to communicate himſelf to them, we ſhould not apprehend ſuch Monſters of Difficulties, neither ſhould we ſo eaſily de-*

ſpair

ſpair to obtain a Good *which he deſireth ſo earneſtly to give us.*

And after that he hath given us his only Son, and delivered him to the Death for us. (c) *How can he refuſe us any thing elſe? No ſurely: We want but a little* Courage and Perſeverance. *We have ſo much of both for our little Temporal Intereſts, and yet almoſt none at all left for the* one thing neceſſary (d).

I'm willing that ſuch as have Difficulty to believe, that 'tis eaſie to find God *in this manner, do not believe what is here told them; but let them make the Experiment of it, and then let them judge by themſelves, and they ſhall ſee that there's but very little told them, in compariſon of what the thing really is. Read therefore, deareſt Reader, this ſmall Treatiſe with a ſimple and ſincere Heart, with the Childlike Littleneſs and Humility of Spirit, without ſeeking to ſcan or examine it ſcrupulouſly, and you ſhall ſee that you'll find very much Good by it. Receive it with the ſame Spirit that we give it you, which is no other but to carry you wholly to God without Reſerve. Our Deſign is*

(c) Rom. 8. 32. (d) Luke 10. 42.

not

nerally conceived very prepoſterous Notions of it, and of the *Doctrine* which chiefly recommends it; tho' in Effect this laſt is nothing elſe but the Inward and Experimental Knowledge of God in the Soul, the Practical Doctrine of Mortification and the New-Birth, the real Participation of the Divine Nature, and an entire Conformity to the Spirit and Life of *Jeſus Chriſt*: in a Word, it is the Doctrine of pure and diſ-intereſſed Love, raiſing the Soul to the living Contemplation of God, and a vital Union with him, ſo far as is attainable in this mortal State; which is the very End and Deſign, the Subſtance and Accompliſhment of the Chriſtian Religion.

It were no hard matter to evince, was there Occaſion for it, that the Principles of this *Divinity* are certain and ſolid; and moreover, that its Foundation, Spirit and Tendency are entirely the ſame with thoſe of the Goſpel of *Chriſt*; namely, the Purification, Reſtauration, and Perfection of the Humane Nature.

I ſhall only beg leave to mention, in a few Words, ſome two or three of its Fundamental Principles or Propoſitions, (as they are ſomewhere deduced by a great Man, *P. P.*) and leave them to the Conſideration of the intelligent Reader.

1. It is certain, that God is the only *Principle* and Source of all Being and of all Good, and likewiſe the Sovereign and ultimate End of all things; whence 'tis juſt and reaſonable that all things, particularly Man, and all his Actions, ſhould attend and ſubmit unto God, wholly return unto him, and abſolutely depend upon him.

2. It is as true, that *God* is Eternal, and that Man was created for Eternity, or the eternal Enjoyment of *God*; on the other hand, that the World and all Temporal things endure but for a Moment, which quickly paſſeth away, and returneth no more; and therefore it is highly reaſonable that all Men ſhould ſeriouſly and wholly give themſelves to Eternal things, regarding only the Temporal in ſo far as the tranſient Neceſſity of a ſmall Subſiſtence doth require, which indeed in

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it ſelf is nothing in reſpect of Eternity.

3. It is alſo evident, that the Sovereign Good, which is *God*, is *pure Spirit*, and a thing purely Interiour and inviſible; and that *Man* alſo, as to his principal and better part, and in ſo far as he is capable of poſſeſſing this Sovereign Good, is pure Spirit, and a thing wholly Interiour: and therefore it is very juſt and reaſonable that he ſhould ſearch for the Purchaſe and Poſſeſſion of the *true Good*, and of Internal, Inviſible, and Spiritual things in his Interiour, or in that part of him which is Spiritual and inviſible; that is to ſay, that he be a Man whoſe Life, Conduct, and Actions, are truly Spiritual and Internal.

None can deny or diſpute the Truth of theſe Propoſitions or Conſequences drawn from them, without offering Violence to Juſtice and ſound Reaſon, as well as to the expreſs Teſtimony of Holy Scripture, which plainly affirms, (*a*) that *of Him* (*God*) *and for him, and by him, are all things*. That (*b*) *God is a Spirit, and ought to be worſhipped in*

(*a*) Rom. 11. (b) Jo. 4.

Spirit

Spirit. And again, (*c*) that *we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen are Temporal only, but the things which are not ſeen, are Eternal.*

This Foundation being once laid, and theſe Principles being yeilded unto, it were eaſie to demonſtrate the Truth and Neceſſity of the Doctrine here recommended, or of that ſort of *Divinity* which is call'd Inward and Spiritual. For as it is eternally true, that *God* made Man for the Enjoyment of himſelf, and endowed him with Capacities and Powers to receive and entertain him: ſo is it as certain, that God cannot dwell or manifeſt himſelf in Man, after that Man hath fall'n and departed from God, till once the Impediments are removed, and thoſe Capacities are fitted to receive him. The inmoſt Centre of our Hearts was deſign'd to be the place of his Abode, the Temple of his Holineſs, and the Habitation of his Peace: Now the peculiar End and Tendency of this Doctrine is, to point to this Centre, to

(*c*) 2 Cor. 4.

intro-

introduce all into the inward Temple, and to teach us how to worſhip in the Holy Place; that ſtanding in the Divine Preſence, and *with open Face beholding, as in a Glaſs, the Glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the ſame Image*; (*d*) that our Hearts being enflamed with the Divine Fire of *Love*, our whole Being may be purified, enlightened and transform'd into the Living Image of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

It ſhews, that as we have departed from *God*, by cleaving to the Creature, ſo it is only by withdrawing from the Creature that we can return to *God*. As our Love is, ſuch always are we. The Love of our ſelves, of outward and earthly things, hath rendred us altogether ſelfiſh, outward, and earthly; hath alienated us from the Life, Light, and Love of God, and entirely indiſpoſed us for receiving or approaching unto him. To the end therefore that this Indiſpoſition may be removed, and that we may recover the Original Integrity of our Faculties, and the Purity of the Divine Love, 'tis

(*d*) 2 Cor. 3.

neceſſary that all ſelfiſh and ſenſual Deſires, all irregular Paſſions and Affections be quite mortified and ſubdued in us; to which end we muſt entirely give up and reſign our ſelves, our whole Capacities and Powers, our Souls and Bodies unto God, that he may take the abſolute Government and Poſſeſſion of 'em, and burn up and extinguiſh whatſoever therein is contrary to him, or unworthy of him; for *our God is a conſuming Fire*: nothing can ſtand or ſubſiſt in his Preſence, but his own Life in us: and according as the Soul is ſincere in its Reſignation to the Conduct and Guidance of the Grace of God, and faithful in following the Motions and Attractions of it, ſo proportionably doth it advance in the ſpiritual Life. And no ſooner has it got rid of its Weights and Fetters, but immediately it is raiſed unto God, its true Centre and Original; nay, always tends and enclines towards him as naturally as the Sparks flee upward.

The Secret as 'twere of the Interiour Life, lieth in the entire Surrender of the whole Being to God, and in the faithful and continual Attention

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of the Heart to the Divine Preſence in us. The Foundation of that Life is laid in this total Surrender, and the Progreſs and Perfection of it conſiſteth in the Growth, Vigour, and ſubſtantial Enjoyment of this Preſence in us. Here the Soul feels that the Spirit of Life in *Chriſt Jeſus* is become the Principle of its Life, the Spring of its Motions and Actions; or rather, that its own Life is hid and ſwallowed up in him, and that it is he that liveth, moveth, and acteth in it. O bleſſed State! Happy, yea, thrice Happy are they who truly arrive at it! O that Men would in good earneſt ſeek to the Fountain, and no more look out for broken Ciſterns! Is it not at this time (as it was propheſied of old *) that *the poor and the needy wander for Water, and there is none, their Tongue faileth for Thirſt!* Alas! they thirſt, and find none; they ask, and receive none, becauſe they ask amiſs.

Our Lord cried and ſaid, (e) *If any Man thirſt, let him come unto me and drink.* He is the Eſſential Fountain and Well-Spring of living Water.

(*) Iſa. 41. 17. (e) Jo. 7. 37.

Hither

Hither all that are weary and heavy laden are invited to come, and here indeed they find Reſt. Here the Eternal *Word* doth ſpeak. Here the Spirit of Life and Power doth move, and bring forth his New Creation. Here the Prophets and Saints of God in all Ages have been form'd and inſtructed, and all of them bear Witneſs of it.

Prayer, according to the Deſcription given of it by a venerable Ancient, (*) is in it ſelf *a familiar Intercourſe and an holy Union of the Soul with God.* It is (ſaith he) the Work of the Heart, which ought always to continue and never to ceaſe. It is the Life and Food of the Soul, the Source of all ſolid Virtue, the Channel thro' which the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit do flow and are communicated.

This manner of it is here call'd eaſie and familiar, becauſe, by the Grace of God, all may eaſily come to perform it if they will. It is a common Prejudice againſt ſet Forms, and the regular Performance of Prayer, eſpecially among the labouring ſort of People,

(*) S. Jo. Climacus.

Tradeſ-

Tradeſmen, and others engag'd in the Commerce of the World; that they can find no time for them, and that their Affairs will not allow them to pray. I would not be thought to condemn all Forms and regular Hours of Prayer, either in private or publick, nor yet to approve the groundleſs Scruples and Objections of ſome diſorderly Perſons againſt them: only I ſay with our excellent Author, that This being properly the Prayer of the Heart, and not of the Head; the internal Exerciſe of Love, and not the external one of bodily Services and Performances, all ſorts of Perſons, Sexes and Conditions are capable of it at all times, and in all places: nay, it often happens, that the moſt ſimple and illiterate advance more in it than others; becauſe Acuteneſs of Spirit is not ſo neceſſary here as Sincerity of Heart and Purity of Love; that is, a Love that is diſ-engaged from the Creatures, and purified by the continual Renunciation of all things. Our Lord well knew that this manner of Prayer is not only practicable by all, but highly neceſſary unto all, otherwiſe he would not have taught us, that *Men ought always*

always to pray and never to faint(g) : nor yet have ſo earneſtly exhorted us *to watch*, (h) *to watch and pray always, that we may be accounted worthy to eſcape all the Evils that ſhall come to paſs.*

Hence it is here particularly recommended to thoſe who have the Cure of Souls, to labour above all things to reach and gain their people by the way of the Heart, and to train and form them to this manner of *Internal Prayer*; which, as it would be the moſt effectual way throughly to reform their Lives, to purifie and ſanctifie their Hearts; ſo would it certainly prove the ſhorteſt and moſt infallible Method to remove, by little and little, all the Superſtitions and Errors that have crept into any Church, and of bringing in a laſting and ſolid *Reformation.* If ſuch a Method were but introduced, it would eaſily take off all that are thus inſtructed from all Humane Inventions and Superadditions, from reſting in means inſtead of the end, and even from finding Reliſh in that which doth amuſe ſuch as now a Days are counted

(g) Luke 18. 1. (h) Chap. 21. 37.

Devout.

Devout. This would be the moſt ready way to put an end to all Controverſies about religious Matters, and really to diſcern the true Religion from that which every where bears the Mask of it; and in a Word, to find out the *Truth*, by repairing to the Fountain of all Truth. Hereby (as our Saviour ſaid) *Men ſhould know the Truth, and the Truth ſhould make them free.* Nothing indeed can be more valuable in a Paſtor or Miniſter, than to be himſelf well skill'd in this Divine Knowledge and Exerciſe, and to be induſtrious to convey the ſame into the Souls committed to his Charge: by being and doing ſo, *he ſhould doubtleſs ſave himſelf, and them that hear him.*

I charitably ſuppoſe, that no Man of Candour or good Senſe, will diſreliſh the following Treatiſe, becauſe it may be the Author is of a Religion different from theirs. Surely Truth or ſound Doctrine is valuable every where, and therefore when we happen to ſee it taught and promoted by Perſons of a different Party or Communion

munion from ours, this, methinks, ſhould be ſo far from making us ſlight and reject the Truth upon that account, that, on the contrary, it ought to enlarge and ſweeten our Spirits towards thoſe that differ from us, and to encline us to entertain more charitable Thoughts of them.

We ought wiſely to diſtinguiſh betwixt Chriſtianity and the Opinions of Men that profeſs it; betwixt the Evangelical Doctrine own'd by any Party, and the Spirit that's predominant in that Party. Pure Religion does not conſiſt in Form, Party or Opinion, but in Truth, Righteouſneſs, and Charity. If we are not of the Truth, and united in the Spirit of it, Uniformity in matters of Opinion, will not avail us: and on the other hand, were we united in the Spirit and in the Truth, as it is in *Jeſus*, (as all certainly muſt be, who are of that Spirit and in that Truth) differences in Opinion could not dangerouſly hurt us, much leſs would they incite us to rend and deſtroy one another, becauſe we think differently one from another. Moreover, as it is not our being in

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the World, but of the World, which indiſpoſes us for being Chriſtians indeed; ſo in like manner, it is not our being in a Party profeſſing *Chriſt Jeſus*, but of the Spirit of a Party, that keeps us from truly following and being united to him. *Whoſoever hath my Commandments and keepeth them*, (ſaith our bleſſed Lord (*) *he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me ſhall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifeſt ſelf to him.* To the ſame purpoſe ſaith the great St. *Paul* (†) *He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that Circumciſion which is outward in the Fleſh: But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and Circumciſion is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter; whoſe Praiſe is not of Men, but of God.*

'Tis true, this Author is *Romaniſt*, but 'tis as true, that ſhe is a Perſecuted one; perſecuted, I ſay, for *Truth and Righteouſneſs ſake*; which Conſideration being enough to entitle her to an eternal *Beatitude*, ſhould be certainly more than enough to recommend her to our Favour and Cordial Acceptance: and therefore, I hope, that

(*) Jo. 14. 21. (†) Rom. 2. 28.

ſince

since now she comes to speak to us in our own Language, all will receive her in the Spirit of Love.

We have added two Letters on the same Subject, written by two eminent Divines of that same Communion, *viz.* Father *Falconi* a *Spaniard*, and *Fr. de Sales* Bp. of *Geneva*; both for a Confirmation of the Maxims contain'd in this Book, and likewise for a farther Illustration of this *Method of Prayer*, and of the true means of advancing in it.

THE

THE
Author's Preface.

THERE was no thought at all of publiſhing to the World this ſmall Treatiſe which had been conceived in great Simplicity. It was deſigned for ſome particular Friends, who deſired to love God with all their Heart. But ſeveral Perſons having ask'd Copies of it becauſe of the great Benefit they had received from the reading thereof, earneſtly wiſhed it might be printed for their own ſatisfaction, without any other View but that.

It is left in its native Simplicity: it doth not condemn the Conduct of any one; but, on the contrary, puts a juſt Eſteem on the ſeveral Methods taken by all others beſides. Whatſoever it contains is ſubmitted to the Judgment of Perſons of ſound Learning and Experience. We only entreat both the one and the other, not to ſtop at the Bark or Outſide, but to enter into the very Deſign of the Perſon who compoſed it; which

which is no other, but to induce all Men to love God, and to serve him more acceptably and successfully than ordinary; and to let them see how this may be done in effect, after a simple and easie manner, accommodated to the ignorant and little ones, who are not capable of extraordinary and elaborate things, but are willing, in good earnest, to give themselves up to God.

We likewise beseech those that shall read it, to read without Prejudice, and they will certainly discover an Unction *hidden under very common Expressions, which will engage them in a diligent Enquiry after that Sovereign Happiness which every one hopes to possess.*

We sometimes use the Word Facility, *affirming, that Perfection is easie, because 'tis easie indeed to find* God *when we seek him* within *us. Some may alledge to the contrary, this Passage of our Saviour,* (a) Ye shall seek me and shall not find me. *Yet this ought not to occasion any Difficulty, seeing that the same God, who cannot contradict himself, hath said,* (b) He that seeketh, findeth. *Whosoever seeks God, without being willing to forsake Sin, doth*

(a) Jo. 7. 14. (b) Mat. 7. 7.

not

not to advance or recommend it to any ones Esteem, but only to encourage the simple and the little ones to go to their Father, who loveth their humble Confidence, and whom Distrust very much displeaseth. Seek not for any thing in it but the Love of God, and retain always a sincere Desire of your Salvation, and ye shall certainly find it by following this little Method without Method.

We don't at all pretend to raise our Opinion above that of others, but we sincerely declare the Experience we have had, both in our selves and others, of the Advantage that there is to be found in the use of this plain and simple manner of going to God. If we pass by several things which are esteem'd, and speak only of the short and easie Method of Prayer, *it is because the Treatise being intended only for this, it can't so well treat of any thing else.*

It is certain, that whosoever reads it in the same Spirit in which it was written, will find nothing that's shocking or uneasie: They will be farther confirmed in the Truth which it contains, would they but make a competent Trial of it.

It belongeth to thee, O Holy Child JESUS! *who loveſt Simplicity and Innocence,*

nocence, and who takeſt thy Delights in being with the Children of Men, (e) *that is, with thoſe amongſt Men, who are truly willing to become Children: It belongeth to thee, I ſay, to give the due Value and Eſteem to this little* Work, *by imprinting it on the Heart, and inclining thoſe who ſhall read it, to ſeek thee in their Interiour Ground, where thou wilt reſt as in a* Manger, *where thou deſireſt to receive the Marks of their Love, and to give them the Teſtimonies of thine. They deprive themſelves of theſe good things by their own Fault. It is thy Work, O thou Infant God! O thou Increated Love! O thou ſilent and abridged WORD! 'tis thy Work to make thy ſelf to be beloved, taſted, and heard. Thou canſt do it, and I am confident Thou wilt do it by this little* Work, *which belongeth entirely to thee, proceedeth wholly from thee, and tendeth only to thee!*

Glory be to thy Name for ever.

(e) Prov. 8. 31.

ERRATA.

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A Short

A

Short and Easie Method

OF

PRAYER,

Which every one may practise with great Facility, and thereby arrive in a little time to an high degree of Perfection.

§. I.

That all are capable to Pray.

ALL Men are capable of *Prayer*; and therefore 'tis a dreadful Unhappiness that generally all Persons almost do imagine that they are not call'd to Prayer. But we are all call'd to Prayer, like as we are all call'd to Salvation.

Prayer is no other thing but the *Application of the Heart to God*, and the *Interiour Exercise of Love.* St. *Paul* enjoins us (*a*) to *Pray without ceasing.* And our Lord saith (*b*) *I say unto you all, Watch and Pray.* All then may pray, and all ought to pray. But I confess, all cannot meditate, and that but very few are fitted for it. So it is not this [sort of] Prayer which God requires, nor which we desire of you, my dearest Brethren, whosoever you be that would be saved. Come ye therefore every one to pray; ye ought to live by Prayer, as ye ought to live by Love. *I counsel you to buy of me Gold tried in the Fire, that you may be rich.* (*c*) It is most easie for you to obtain it, yea, more than you can imagine. *Come all ye that are a thirst unto these living Waters; and don't amuse your selves to hew out broken Cisterns that can hold no Water.* (*d*) Come all ye hungry Hearts, which find not any thing that can content you, and you shall be fully satisfied. Come ye poor afflicted

(*a*) 1 Thess. 5. 17. (*b*) Mar. 13. 33, 37. (*c*) Rev. 3. 18. (*d*) Jo. 7. 37. Jer. 2, 13.

ones,

ones, ye who are oppreſs'd with Troubles and Sorrows, and ye ſhall be comforted. Come ye that are ſick to your Phyſician, and fear not to approach him becauſe you are weighed down with Maladies: lay open to him all your Diſeaſes, and ye ſhall be relieved. Come ye Children to your Father, and he will receive you with the Arms of Love. Come ye poor wandring and ſtragling Sheep, draw nigh to your Shepherd. Come ye Sinners near to your Saviour. Come ye dull and ignorant ones, ye are all fit for Prayer, even ye who think your ſelves incapable thereof, are moſt of all fitted for it. Come all of you without Exception, Jeſus Chriſt calleth you all. Yet let not thoſe who are without an Heart come, for they only are diſpens'd from coming; for there muſt be an Heart to love. But who is without an Heart? O come then and give this Heart unto God; and learn here the manner of doing it. All who are willing to pray can eaſily do it with the Aſſiſtance of the ordinary Graces, and of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are common to all Chriſtians.

Prayer is the Key of Perfection and of ſupreme Happineſs. It is the effectual Means of delivering us from all Vices, and of acquiring all Virtues: for the great means of becoming Perfect, is to walk in the Preſence of God. This He ſaid himſelf (*e*) *Walk in my Preſence, and be perfect.* 'Tis Prayer alone that can give you this Preſence, and that can give it you continually.

Therefore you muſt learn a kind of Prayer which can be made at all times, which doth not divert from outward Buſineſs, and which Princes, Kings, Prelates, Prieſts, Magiſtrates, Soldiers, Children, Tradeſmen and Labourers, Women and ſick Perſons, may all perform. This is not the Prayer of the Head, but the Prayer of the Heart. It is not a Prayer of Thought only, becauſe the Spirit of Man is ſo bounded, that while he thinks on one thing, he can't think on another: but it is the Prayer of the Heart, which is not at all interrupted by all the Occupations of the Mind: nothing but irregular Affections can interrupt the

(*e*) Gen. 17. 1.

Prayer

Prayer of the Heart; and 'tis almoſt impoſſible for the Soul which has once taſted God, and the ſweetneſs of his Love, to reliſh any thing elſe but Him.

There's nothing more eaſie, than to have God, and to taſte [or delight in] Him. He is more in us than we our ſelves. He deſires more to give himſelf to us, than we do to poſſeſs him. All conſiſts in the right manner of ſeeking him, which yet is ſo eaſie and ſo natural, that the very Air which we breath is not more. And even you who think your ſelves ſo dull, as that ye are not good for any thing; you (I ſay) may live by Prayer, and upon God himſelf, as eaſily and as continually as ye live by the Air which you breath. Shall ye not then be highly criminal if ye don't do it? But doubtleſs ye will do it when ye ſhall have learned the way, which is indeed the eaſieſt that can be.

§. II.

Of the right Manner of Prayer.

THERE are two ways of introducing Souls into Prayer, which they may and ought to uſe for a certain time. The one is, *Meditation*; the other is, *Meditation upon Reading*.

Meditation upon Reading is nothing elſe, but to take ſome weighty Truths, which afford matter both for Speculation and Practice, but eſpecially for the latter, and to proceed in this manner. *Firſt*, You ſhall take the Truth, ſuch as you're pleaſed to chuſe, and read two or three Lines of it in order, that you may taſte and digeſt them, endeavouring to draw out the Juice or Subſtance of 'em, and to keep fix'd to the place which you read, ſo long as you find any Reliſh in it, not paſſing further till that place become inſipid unto you.

Then you muſt take as much more, and do juſt the ſame, not reading above half

half a page at a time: for it is not ſo much the quantity of Reading that's profitable, as the manner of Reading. Hence thoſe who run apace don't improve by what they read, any more than the Bees can't draw out the Juice of the Flowers by flying over 'em, but by reſting upon them. To read much, ſerves more for School-Learning than for Myſtical Knowledge: but to profit really by Spiritual Books, they muſt be read in the manner above expreſs'd; and I'm ſure, that if any did ſo, they would by Reading gradually accuſtom themſelves to Prayer, and become very much diſpos'd for it.

The other (Help to Prayer) is, *Meditation*, which is performed in a ſeaſon ſet apart for it, and not in the time of Reading. I think it might be good to enter upon it in this manner. After having placed your ſelf in the preſence of God, by an act of living Faith, you muſt read ſomething that's ſubſtantial, and ſtop gently upon it; not that you may reaſon, but only to fix your Mind; conſidering that the principal Exerciſe ought to be the Preſence of God, and that the Subject

ſhould ſerve more to ſtay your Mind than to employ your Reaſon. This being ſuppoſs'd, I ſay, that the lively Faith of God's being preſent in the Ground of our Hearts, muſt needs engage us to ſink down mightily into our ſelves, gathering all the Senſes inwards, and hindring them from being ſcatter'd abroad: which indeed from the very firſt is a powerful means of ridding us from a Multitude of Diſtractions, and of removing us far from outward Objects, that we may approach unto God, who cannot be found but in the inward Ground of our ſelves, and in our Centre, which is the *Holy of Holies*, where he dwels. Yea, he promiſes that *if any Man do his Will, he will come unto him and make his abode in him.* (*f*) St. *Auſtin* accuſes himſelf for the time which he had loſt, in not having at firſt ſought God after this manner.

When therefore any one is thus ſunk and introverted into himſelf, and throughly penetrated with a living Senſe of the Divine Preſence in his inward Ground; when the Senſes are

(*f*) *Jo.* 14. 23.

all

all gathered up and retir'd from the Circumference to the Centre: which indeed is ſomewhat painful in the Beginning, but afterwards becomes moſt eaſie, as I ſhall tell you anon. When I ſay, the Soul is thus recollected into it ſelf, and when it is employed ſweetly and gently about the Truth it hath read, not in reaſoning much upon it, but in ſavouring and taſting it, and in exciting the Will by Affection, rather than in applying the Underſtanding by Conſideration: The Affection being thus ſtirred up, we muſt leave it to reſt ſweetly and in Peace, that it may ſwallow down what it has taſted: for ſuppoſe one ſhould but chew an excellent Bit, and indeed reliſh it, yet if he did not forbear a little this Motion, ſo as to ſwallow it down, he could not be nouriſh'd by it. So in like manner, when the Affection is moved, if we would go on to move it ſtill, we ſhould exſtinguiſh its Fire, and thereby deprive the Soul of its Food; and therefore it muſt neceſſarily ſwallow down what it hath chew'd and taſted, by a little amorous Repoſe full of Reſpect and Confidence. This Method is moſt neceſſary, and

would advance a Soul more in a little while, than any other is capable to do in ſeveral Years.

But as I have hinted, that the direct and principal Exerciſe ought always to be the View of the Divine Preſence: This alſo we ought to perform in the moſt faithful manner we can; namely, to call in our Senſes whenſoever they begin to wander. This is a ſhort and effectual way to combat all Diſtractions, becauſe if any would oppoſe them directly, they but irritate and encreaſe them; whereas by ſinking down in the View and Faith of the Divine Preſence, and ſimply recollecting our ſelves, we combat them indirectly, and without thinking of them, though in a moſt powerful Manner.

I likewiſe admoniſh all Beginners not to run from one Truth to another, or from one Subject to another; but to hold by one and the ſame ſo long as they find any Reliſh in it. This is the way quickly to enter and penetrate into the Truths propoſed, to taſte them, and to have them imprinted upon us.

I ſaid, 'tis difficult in the Beginning for one to recollect himſelf, becauſe of

of the Habit that the Soul has gotten to be wholly without: but when 'tis a little accuſtom'd to Recollection by the Violence which it has done to it ſelf, this becomes mighty eaſie unto it; not only becauſe it acquires this Habit, but alſo becauſe God, who ſeeks but to communicate himſelf to his Creature, ſends it ſuch abundant Graces and ſuch an Experimental Taſte of his Preſence, as render it moſt eaſie and Delightful.

§. III.

For thoſe who cannot read.

THOSE who cannot read, ſhall not for all this be depriv'd of [the Benefit of] Prayer. JESUS CHRIST is the great Book written without and within, which will teach them all things.

They ought to take this Method: *Firſt*, They muſt learn a fundamental Truth, which is, that *the Kingdom of God*

God is within them;* and that it is there that it muſt be ſought.

They who have the Care of Souls ought to teach their Pariſhioners to pray, even as they teach them the Catechiſm. They teach them the *End* for which they were created, but they don't ſufficiently inſtruct them how to come to the *Enjoyment* of this End. I could wiſh they would teach it them in this manner: Namely, That they ought to begin by a profound Act of Adoration, and of Annihilation [of themſelves] before God, and therewith ſhutting their bodily Eyes, endeavour to open thoſe of the Soul; then they are to gather it wholly inward, and to exerciſe themſelves directly with the Preſence of God, by a lively Faith that God is in us; not ſuffering their Faculties and Senſes to wander abroad, but keeping them in Captivity and Subjection as much as they are able.

Then let them ſay thus the *Lord's-Prayer* in their Native Tongue, underſtanding in ſome meaſure what they

* Luke 17. 21.

ſay,

ſay, and believing that *God*, who is within in their Interiour, is very willing to be their *Father*. Being in this diſpoſition, let them beg their neceſſaries of him, and having pronounced this Word FATHER, let them continue ſome moments in ſilence with much Reverence, waiting that this their heavenly Father may be pleas'd to diſcover unto them his Will.

At other times, the Chriſtian conſidering himſelf as a Child that's quite ſpent, and all over filthy through his repeated Falls, and who has no Power either to ſtand on his Legs, or make himſelf clean, let him lay open his Condition to his Father in a ſhameful and humble manner, adding every now and then ſome Expreſſions of Love and Regret, and again remaining in ſilence. Thereafter going on with the *Lords-Prayer*, let him pray this King of Glory to reign in him; giving up himſelf to him indeed, to the end that he may do it, and ſurrendring to him the juſt Rights which he hath over him.

If he perceives an Inclination to Peace and Silence, he ought not to proceed,

proceed, but to abide in that ſtate while it laſteth. After which he may go on to the next Petition, *viz. Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is done in Heaven.* (*g*) Whereupon theſe humble Suppliants are to deſire that *God* may accompliſh all his Will in them, and by them: They muſt give their Heart and their Liberty unto God, that he may diſpoſe thereof at his Pleaſure: and ſeeing that the peculiar work of the Will ſhould be to love, they muſt deſire to love, and ask of God his pure Love. But this ought to be done in a calm and peaceful manner: and ſo of the reſt of the *Lords-Prayer*; which the abovenamed Perſons may very well teach them.

They ſhould take care that they don't overburthen themſelves with an exceſſive number of * *Paters*, *Aves*, or other vocal Prayers; for one *Pater* alone ſaid after the manner above expreſs'd, will be of very great Advantage.

(*g*) Matt. 6. 10. * The Author being *Romaniſt*, ſpeaks particularly to thoſe of her own Communion.

Again,

Again, They may place themſelves as Sheep before their Shepherd, and ask of him their true ſubſtantial Food. *O Divine Shepherd! Thou feedeſt thy Sheep with thy ſelf, and Thou art their daily Bread.*

They may alſo repreſent unto him the Neceſſities of their Families; but all muſt be done in this direct and principal View of Faith, that God is within us.

Whatſoever Men figure out or repreſent unto themſelves as *God*, is no ſuch thing at all; a lively Faith of his Preſence is ſufficient: for we muſt not form any Image of God, tho' we may indeed of *Jeſus Chriſt*; beholding him as a Child, as Crucified, or in any other State or Myſtery, provided that the Soul do always ſeek him in its own Centre. Again, We may conſider him as our Phyſician, and preſent unto him our Wounds, that He may heal them; but ſtill without any Effort or Violence, and with ſome little Silence interpoſed from time to time, ſo that the Silence may be mix'd with Action; thus by degrees increaſing the Silence, and leſſening the Diſcourſe, until

until in the end by means of yeilding gradually to the Operation of God, he may get the aſcendant in us; as we ſhall note afterwards.

When the Preſence of God is once given, and the Soul begins by little and little to reliſh the Silence and Stilneſs, this experimental Senſe of the Divine Preſence introduceth it into the ſecond Degree of Prayer; which is ordinarily attain'd both by ſuch as can read, and ſuch as cannot, by taking the Method above-deſcrib'd; tho' indeed God does favour ſome priviled'd Souls with it even from the beginning.

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§. IV.

Of the Second Degree of Prayer.

SOME call this *ſecond* Degree *Contemplation*, the *Prayer of Faith* and *of Reſt*; others, *the Prayer of Simplicity*: we ſhall uſe this laſt Name here, as being more proper than that of *Contem-*

templation, which ſignifies a more advanced ſort of Prayer than that we now ſpeak off. When the Soul hath exercis'd it ſelf for ſome time, as aforeſaid, it feels by degrees that the facility of applying it ſelf to God is given it; it begins to recollect it ſelf more eaſily, and Prayer becomes eaſie, ſweet, and delightful; it knows now that this is the way to find *God*, for it feels the ſavour of his Ointments. But then it muſt alter its meaſures, and ſee to perform faithfully and couragiouſly what I'm a going to ſay, without being troubled at any thing that may be alledg'd concerning it.

Firſt, So ſoon as the Soul recollecteth and placeth it ſelf in the Preſence of God with Faith, let it continue thus a little in an awful ſilence.

But if from the beginning, while it formeth its Act of Faith, it feels ſome little ſenſe of the Divine Preſence, let it ſtop there without troubling it ſelf about any thing, or proceeding further; and let it hold what is given it, ſo long as it laſteth. If this paſſeth away, then let it ſtir up its Will by ſome tender Affection; and if by the means

means of the firſt Affection it finds it ſelf placed again in its ſweet Peace, let it continue therein. We muſt blow the Fire gently, and when it is once kindled, ceaſe to blow it more; for if one ſhould go on to blow ſtill, he would but extinguiſh it.

I require above all, that one may never conclude his Prayer without continuing for ſome time towards the end in a reſpectful Silence. 'Tis likewiſe of great Importance for the Soul to go to Prayer with Courage, and that it bring along with it a pure and diſintereſted Love: let it not go ſo much to receive any thing from God, as to pleaſe him, and do his Will. For a Servant who ſerves his Maſter only according as he rewards him, is indeed unworthy of any Reward at all. Go therefore to Prayer, not ſeeking to enjoy God, but only to be as he pleaſeth. This will preſerve in you an Evenneſs of Spirit in Aridity as well as in Abundance, and keep you from wondering either at God's Repulſes, or your own Drineſſes.

§. V.

§. V.

Of Spiritual Drineſſes.

THO' God hath no other deſire, but to communicate himſelf to the loving Soul that ſeeks him; yet he often hideth himſelf, that he may rouze it from its Lazineſs, and oblige it to ſeek after him with Love and Fidelity. But O! with what Bounty doth he reward the Faithfulneſs of his beloved Soul? And how much are his apparent Withdrawings followed with amorous Careſſes! Some are apt to think, that even then 'tis a greater ſign of Fidelity, and argues more of one's Love, to ſeek him with the preſſing Efforts of the Head, and the Force of one's own Activity; or that theſe will quickly make him return. No: believe me (dear Souls) this is not at all the Conduct of this degree of Prayer; for 'tis neceſſary, that with a loving Patience, a contrite, lowly, and humble Regard, a frequent, but peaceable Affection, and a reſpectful ſilence, ye wait for the Return of your

your Beloved. You'll let him ſee, by this manner of acting, that 'tis Him alone, and his good Pleaſure, that you love, and not the Pleaſure you may have in loving him. Therefore 'tis ſaid, (*h*) *Be not impatient in the times of Aridity and Darkneſs, ſuffer the Delays and Suſpenſions of the Conſolations of God: continue united to him,* [cleave unto him, and depart not away:] *wait patiently for him, that your Life may grow and be renewed.*

Be ye always patient in Prayer, and tho' ye ſhould never make any other all your Life-time, but to wait in a humble, reſign'd and contented Spirit, for the Return of your Beloved; Oh! you ſhould pray to excellent purpoſe: in the mean time you might pour out ſome Complaints of Love. O! but this way of proceeding doth mightily charm the Heart of God; and more powerfully oblige him to return than any other!

(*h*) Ecclus. 2. 2, 3.

§. VI.

§. VI.

Of Reſignation.

HERE it is that the Reſignation and entire Surrender of our ſelves unto God muſt begin; namely, by being mightily convinced, that whatſoever befals us from one moment to another, and whatſoever we want, is in the Order and Will of God. This Conviction would render us content with every thing, and make us look upon all that happens to us as coming from God, and not from the Creature. I earneſtly beſeech and conjure you, (my deareſt Brethren) whoſoever you be that are willing indeed to give your ſelves unto God, never to take back your ſelves again, when ye ſhall have once given your ſelves to him; but believe, that a thing which is given away is no more at your Diſpoſal.

Reſignation is the thing of the greateſt Conſequence in the whole way of a Chriſtian; nay, 'tis the Key of the whole Interiour Life. Whoſoever knows fully,

fully to resign himself, shall in a short time become perfect. We must therefore hold firm to this Resignation, without listning to Ratiocination or to Reflection. A great Faith makes a great Resignation: we ought to commit our selves unto God, *Hoping* [as St. *Paul* saies] (*i*) *against all hope.*

Resignation is a putting off all care of our selves, that we may leave all that concerns us entirely to the Conduct of God. All Christians are exhorted thus to forsake and resign themselves; for 'tis said unto all in general, (*k*) *Take ye no thought for the Morrow: for your Heavenly Father knoweth what ye stand in need of.* (*l*) *Think on him in all thy Ways, and he will direct thy Paths.* (*m*) *Commit thy Works unto the Lord, and he will establish thy Thoughts.* Again, (*n*) *Commit thy whole Way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he himself will do it.*

Our Resignation then ought to be an entire forsaking and abandoning of all unto God, both with respect to the

(*i*) Rom. 4 18. (*k*) Matt. 6. 25. (*l*) Pr. 3. 6. (*m*) ch. 16. 3. (*n*) Ps. 37. 5.

exte-

exteriour and interiour [Life,] forgetting our ſelves in a great meaſure, and thinking on God only: by this means the Heart remains always free, contented, and diſingag'd.

As to the Practice of this Virtue, It conſiſts in a continual forſaking and loſing all ſelf-will in the Will of God; in renouncing all particular Inclinations, how good ſoever they may ſeem to be, ſo ſoon as we feel them ariſe in us, that we may always ſtand in the Indifference, willing only what God hath will'd and determin'd from Eternity, and being indifferent as to all things that regard either the Body or the Soul, temporal or eternal Goods; forgetting what is paſt, giving up the Time preſent unto God, and leaving to his Providence that which is to come; being contented with what happens every moment, ſeeing it brings along with it the Eternal Order of God concerning us, and which is a Declaration of his Will ſo much the more Infallible, as it is common to, and inevitable for all; not attributing any thing that befals us to the Creature, but beholding all things in God, and con-

conſidering them as coming infallibly from his hand, our own Sin only excepted.

Suffer your ſelves therefore to be govern'd by God, as it ſhall pleaſe him, both with reſpect to your outward and inward ſtate.

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§. VII.

Of Sufferings.

BE content to ſuffer whatſoever God ſhall ſee fit to lay upon you. If you love him purely, you'll ſeek him in this Life, as much on Mount *Calvary*, as upon *Tabor*.

You muſt love him (I ſay) as much upon *Calvary* as *Tabor*, ſince that is the place where he diſcovers the moſt of his Love.

Do not like to thoſe Perſons who give themſelves unto him at one time, and take themſelves back again at another. They give themſelves up to be careſſed, but they take themſelves again

again when they are crucified, or at leaſt go to ſeek for their Conſolation in the Creature.

No, no, (dear Souls) you will never find true Conſolation, but in the Love of the Croſs, and an entire Reſignation of your Wills. *O, He that hath no reliſh of the Croſs, ſavoureth not the things that be of God!* (o) 'Tis impoſſible to love *God* without loving the Croſs; and indeed a Heart which hath the Reliſh of the Croſs, findeth even the moſt bitter things to be ſweet, pleaſant and delightful. *The hungry Soul findeth bitter things ſweet* (p); becauſe the more it hungers after God, the more doth it hunger after the Croſs. The Croſs giveth God, and God giveth the Croſs.

The great Sign of the Internal Advancement is, if one advanceth in the Croſs. Reſignation and the Croſs go Hand in Hand together.

So ſoon as ye feel any thing that's contrary to you, and which is propos'd as a Suffering, reſign your ſelves immediately to God with reſpect to this

(o) Mat. 16. 23. (p) Pr. 27. 7.

C 5 very

very thing, and give up your selves as a Sacrifice unto him; then ye shall see that when the Cross cometh, it will not be so very heavy, because ye have willingly accepted it. Which notwithstanding will not keep you from feeling the Weight of it; as some do imagine, that the feeling the Cross is not to suffer: for to feel Suffering is one of the principal Parts of Suffering it self. Jesus Christ would needs suffer all the Sharpness of it. We often bear the Cross in Weakness, at other times with Strength: all ought to be equal to us in the Will of God.

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§. VIII.

Of the Mysteries [of our Redemption through *Jesus Christ.*]

SOME may object unto me, that at this rate one cann't have [any Sense of] the *Mysteries* impress'd upon him

him: but 'tis quite otherwiſe, for theſe are given in reality to the Soul. *Jeſus Chriſt* whom we reſign our ſelves unto, and whom we follow as *the Way*, whom we hear as *the Truth*, and who animateth us as *the Life*, (*q*) imprinting himſelf upon the Soul, makes it to bear all his ſeveral States. Now to *bear* the States or Conditions of *Jeſus Chriſt*, is a far greater thing than barely to *conſider* the States of *Jeſus Chriſt*. St. *Paul* did bear in his Body the States of *Jeſus Chriſt*. *I bear* (ſaith he) (*r*) *in my Body the Marks of the Lord Jeſus*; but he does not ſay that he reaſon'd upon them.

In this State of Reſignation *Jeſus Chriſt* often giveth us ſome Views of his States after a very particular manner. Then it behoveth us to receive them, and to ſuffer our ſelves to be applied to any thing that pleaſeth him; taking equally all the Diſpoſitions that he ſhall ſee fit to place us in, not chuſing any one of our ſelves but only this, of continuing always with him, of affectionatly deſiring him, and of an-

(*q*) Jo. 14. 6. (*r*) Gal. 6. 17.

nihilating our selves before him; But receiving with an Evenness of Mind all that he doth give us, whether Light or Darkness, Fruitfulness or Barreness, Strength or Weakness, Sweetness or Bitterness, Temptation or Distraction, Pains, Troubles, or Doubtings; nothing of all these ought to stop us. There are some Persons whom God doth apply for the space of whole Years to a feeling Sense of some one or other of these Mysteries. The simple View or Thought of such a Mystery, gathers them inwards; therefore they ought to be faithful to it: but when God removes it from them, then let them willingly be deprived of it. There be others who are troubled because they can't think of any one Mystery; but this is without reason, seeing that the affectionate Attention of the Mind to God includeth all particular Devotion; and whosoever is united to God alone by finding his Rest in Him, is indeed applied to all the Mysteries in a more excellent manner. He that loves God, loveth every thing that proceedeth from him.

§. IX.

§. IX.

Of Virtue.

THIS is the ſhort and certain way to acquire Virtue; becauſe God being the Principle of all Virtue, to poſſeſs Him is indeed to poſſeſs all Virtue; and the nearer we approach unto this Poſſeſſion, the more we have of Virtue in an eminent Degree. Again I ſay, that all Virtue which is not given from within, is but a Mask of Virtue, and is like a Garment which is taken away or continueth for a ſhort ſpace. But the Virtue that's communicated from the inward Ground, is the only true eſſential and permanent Virtue: *The Beauty of the King's Daughter cometh from within* (ſ); and of all Souls there are none who do practiſe it more vigorouſly than theſe, tho' they don't think of the Virtue in particular. For *God*, to whom they keep themſelves united, makes them to perform it in

(ſ) Pſ. 44. 15. vulg.

all its kinds. He doth not allow them any thing, he doth not suffer them to take any little pleasure. O what Hunger have not these amorous Souls after Sufferings! How many Austerities would not they give themselves over to, were they left to act according to their own Desires? They think only on what may please their Beloved, and so they begin to neglect themselves and contemn themselves: the more they love their God, the more do they hate themselves and disrelish the Creatures. O if Men could but learn this most easie Method, which is fitted for every one, for the Dull and Ignorant as well as the Learned, how easily would the whole Church of God be reform'd! There needs no more but to love. *Love* (saith St. *Austin*) *and do then what ye will.* For when we love indeed, we can't will to do any thing that may displease our Beloved.

§. X.

§. X.

Of Mortification.

I Say further, that 'tis next to impoſſible for one ever to arrive at the perfect Mortification of his Senſes and Paſſions by any other way. The reaſon is very natural and plain, it being the Soul that gives Life and Vigour to the Senſes; and likewiſe the Senſes which irritate and raiſe the Paſſions. A dead Man hath no more any Senſe or Paſſion left in him, becauſe of the ſeparation which is made betwixt the Soul and the Senſes. All the Labour which is done in the outward part carries ſtill the Soul more outwardly into the things to which it doth apply it ſelf more ſtrongly. 'Tis in theſe things, I ſay, that it pours forth and exerts it ſelf moſt: as for example: Being applied directly to Auſterities and other Externals, it is wholly turn'd that way, and thereby invigorates the Senſes inſtead of mortifying them. For 'tis only from the Application of the Soul

that the Senſes can draw any thing of Force or Vigour, and the more the Soul is in them, the more doth it ſtill communicate unto them. This Life of Senſe doth move and provoke the Paſſions, ſo far is it from extinguiſhing them. Auſterities may well weaken the Body, but can never blunt the Edge or Vigor of the Senſes, for the reaſon juſt now mention'd. One thing alone can do it, which is this, that the Soul by the Means of Recollection be turn'd wholly inward or within it ſelf, to the end it may be taken up with God, who is there preſent. If it turn all its Vigour and Force within it ſelf, it is ſeparated from the Senſes by this very Action alone, and ſo employing its whole Force and Strength within, it leaves the Senſes without Vigour; and the more it advances and approaches to God, the more it is ſeparated and dis-joyn'd from it ſelf.

This is the reaſon why thoſe Perſons in whom the Attractions of Grace are ſtrong, do find themſelves wholly weakned in the outward Man, ſo as many times to ſwoon or faint away. I don't by this mean, as if we ought not at all

all to mortify our ſelves; no; for Mortification muſt always accompany Prayer, according to the meaſure of every ones Strength, Circumſtances and Obedience. But I ſay, that none ought to make Mortification their chiefeſt Exerciſe, nor abſolutely to tie themſelves to ſuch and ſuch Auſterities; but by following ſimply the inward Attraction [of the Spirit] and employing themſelves with the Divine Preſence, without thinking of Mortification in particular, God does [procure and] make them to undergo all ſorts of it: and he gives no reſpite to the Souls that are faithful in ſurrendering themſelves unto Him, until he has mortified in them all that remains there to be mortified.

Therefore we muſt keep our ſelves only attentive to God, and then all is done with great Perfection. All are not capable of outward Auſterities, but all are capable of this. There be two Senſes, in the mortifying of which we cannot well exceed; namely, the Seeing and the Hearing; becauſe theſe take in the ſpecies and Idea's of things:

but God doth it effectually, we need only to follow his Spirit.

The Soul has a double Advantage by observing this Conduct; namely, that according as it withdraws from the outward, it still draws nearer unto God: and by approaching unto God, besides the secret Power and Virtue it receives which supports and preserves it, it necessarily departs from Sin, and so much the more as it approaches nearer to God; and then it is brought to an Habitual Conversion.

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§. XI.

Of Conversion.

TURN ye and be converted unto God in the Bottom of your Hearts, according as you have deeply revolted from him, (a) *Conversion* is nothing else but the turning away from the Creature to return unto God.

(a) Isa. 31. 6. vulg.

The

The Converſion, which is only from Sin to Grace, is not perfect, tho' it is good and neceſſary to Salvation: for that it may be entire and compleat it ought to be made from the Outward to the Inward.

The Soul being once converted [or turned] to *God*, finds a very great Facility to continue thus turn'd unto Him: and the more it continues turned, the nearer it approacheth *God*, and cleaveth to Him; and the nearer it approacheth *God*, the farther doth it neceſſarily withdraw from the Creature, which is oppoſite to God. So that hereby the Soul is ſo powerfully confirm'd in its Converſion, that it becomes habitual and as 'twere natural unto it. But you muſt know that this is not done by any violent working or Exerciſe of the Creature. The only Exerciſe it can and ought to do on its part, by the Grace of God, is to exert a ſtrong endeavour to turn and gather it ſelf inward: after which there's nothing more to be done, but to remain thus turned towards *God* in a continual Adherence unto Him.

God has an attractive Virtue; which preſſeth

presseth the Soul always more and more strongly to go to himself, and in drawing it he purifies it; just as we see the Sun drawing up a thick Vapour to it self; it attracts it gradually, the Vapour using no other endeavour, but to let it self be drawn by the Sun; which the nearer it brings it to its self, the more it subtilises and purifies it. There's only this difference, that this Vapour is not drawn freely, and followeth not voluntarily, as the Soul doth.

This manner of introverting or turning into the Inward, is most easie, and advanceth the Soul without any Violence, and altogether naturally, forasmuch as *God* is our Centre. The Centre hath always a most powerful attractive Virtue; and the more eminent and spiritual the Centre is, the more violent and impetuous is its Attraction [or Magnetism,] and the more difficult it is to stop it.

But besides the attractive Virtue of the Centre, there's also given to all the Creatures a mighty strong Propension to a Re-union with their Centra: Hence the most Spiritual and

Perfect.

Perfect have this Inclination ſtrongeſt in them. No ſooner is a thing turn'd towards its Centre, than it ruſhes with an extream ſwiftneſs into it, if ſo be that it be not ſtopt by ſome invincible Impediment in the way. A Stone in the Air is no ſooner let go, and turn'd towards the Earth, than by its own proper Weight it tends to it as its Centre. Juſt ſo is it with the Water and Fire, which, unleſs they are hindred, run continually to their Centre. And thus it is that the Soul, by the ſtrong endeavour which it uſes to gather it ſelf inward, being once turn'd into this central Bent or Inclination, falls gradually into its Centre, tho' without any other Effort than the Weight of its Love; and the more it continues peaceable and calm, without offering to move it ſelf, the more ſwiftly doth it advance, becauſe it gives the more place to this attractive and central Virtue, to draw it ſtrongly unto it ſelf.

The chief Concern then we ought to have is, to recollect our ſelves the moſt inwardly that's poſſible for us, not being troubled at the pain and difficulty

ficulty which this Exercise may give us; for that will be very soon recompenc'd by a wonderful concurrence on God's part, which will render it most easie; provided we be faithful, meekly and gently to call back our Heart, by a small, sweet and peaceful Retreat, and by serene and tender Affections, whenever it's withdrawn through Distractions or outward Business. When at any time the Passions arise, a little Retreat inwards unto *God*, who is there present, doth allay them with great Facility: any other way of engaging with them does rather exasperate than quiet them.

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§. XII.

§. XII.

Of the Prayer of God's ſimple Preſence.

THE Soul that's faithful in exerciſing it ſelf, as hath been ſaid, in the Love and Affection of its God, is altogether ſurpriz'd when it feels how that by little and little he gets the entire Poſſeſſion of it. His Preſence becometh now ſo eaſy to the Soul, that it can no more be without it: This it has acquir'd by Habit as well as Prayer. The Soul feels the Calm and Serenity prevailing upon it by Degrees: the Silence maketh up its whole Prayer, and God giveth it an infus'd Love, which is the Beginning of an unſpeakable Happineſs. O! if I were permitted to proſecute and declare the Infinite Degrees that follow! But here I muſt ſtop, ſince that I write only for Beginners, waiting till God ſhall be pleas'd to bring forth what may be ſerviceable for all States.

We

We muſt be content only to ſay, that then is the Seaſon, when it is of great Conſequence to ceaſe from all Operation and Self-activity, that God alone may act in us. *Be ſtill*, [or keep your ſelves at *reſt*] *and acknowledge that I am God*; is what he adviſeth us by *David* (*v*). But the Creature is ſo much affected with what it does it ſelf, that it believes it doth not any thing at all, if it do not feel, know and diſtinguiſh its own Operation. It does not ſee that the Swiftneſs of its Motion hindereth it from perceiving its Steps, and that *God*'s Operation becoming more ſtrong and abundant ſwalloweth up that of the Creature; even as we ſee that the Sun as it ariſes, gradually doth ſwallow up all the Light of the Stars, which before he appear'd could very well be diſtinguiſh'd. It is not the want of Light that keeps us then from diſcerning the Stars, but the Exceſs of Light.

The Caſe is the ſame here; the Creature can't any more diſtinguiſh its own

(*v*) Pſ. 45. 10.

Ope-

Operation, becauſe a general and ſtrong Light abſorbeth all its little diſtinct Lights, and makes them entirely diſappear, by reaſon of its Exceſs, which widely ſurpaſſes them all. So that they who charge this ſort of Prayer with Idleneſs, are very much miſtaken; and 'tis want of Experience that makes them ſpeak ſo. O did they but give themſelves ſome little Trouble to make an Eſſay of it! in a very little time they ſhould become experienced and knowing in this matter.

I tell you therefore that this Deliquium or diſappearance of operating comes not of want, but of abundance, as any one that ſhall make the Experiment will ſufficiently perceive. He ſhall know that it is not an unfruitful Silence occaſion'd through want, but a full and unctuous Silence proceeding from Fulneſs and Abundance.

Two ſorts of Perſons are ſilent, the one for having nothing to ſay; and the other, becauſe they have too much. The Caſe is the ſame in this Degree of Prayer we ſpeak off. They are ſilent not for want, but thro' Fulneſs and Exceſs.

The

The Water causes Death to two Persons in a very different manner. One dieth of Thirst, and the other is drown'd: one dieth thro' the want, and the other thro' the abundance of it. Even so here, it is the Abundance that makes the Operations to cease. Therefore 'tis of great Importance in this Degree for one to remain in as much Silence as possibly he can.

An Infant hanging at the Nurses Breasts gives us a sensible Demonstration of this. It begins to move its tender Lips, that it may cause the Milk to come; but when the Milk cometh in abundance, it is content to swallow it down, without making any sensible Motion: if it should make any, it would but hurt it self, and spill the Milk, and so be oblig'd to give over.

Just so at the Beginning of Prayer, we ought first of all to move the Lips of our Affection, but when the Milk of Grace doth flow, there's nothing by us to be done, but to abide in Stilness and Repose, gently swallowing down what is given in; and when the Milk ceaseth to come, to move again the Affection a little, as the Infant doth the

the Lip. If any one ſhould do otherwiſe, he could not profit himſelf by the Grace, which is here communicated to draw the Soul into the Repoſe of Love, and not to excite it to the Motions of its own Multiplicity.

But what becometh of this Child that ſwalloweth the Milk ſo gently and in Peace, without moving or ſtirring? Who could believe that it were fed in ſuch a manner? And yet the more it ſucks in Peace, the more it thrives by the Milk. What is it, I ſay, that happeneth to this Child? Why, it falleth aſleep in its Mothers Boſom: and likewiſe the Soul that's quiet and peaceful in Prayer, falleth oftentimes into a Myſtical [or inward] Slumber, wherein all the Faculties and Powers thereof are ſilent, until they are prepar'd to enter into the Subſtance of that which is given them tranſiently. You ſee how the Soul is here led in a way that's wholly natural, without Pain, without Violence, without Study, without Artifice.

The Interiour Ground is not a ſtrong Hold that's to be taken by Canon and Storm: 'tis a Kingdom of Peace

Peace which is gain'd only by Love. And thus if any one will but ſweetly follow this little Train, undertaken and manag'd in the foreſaid manner, he ſhall quickly arrive at Infuſed Prayer. God requires not any thing that's extraordinary, or that's too difficult; but on the contrary, a meerly ſimple and Child-like way of proceeding doth pleaſe him beſt.

That which is greateſt and moſt eminent in Religion, is indeed the eaſieſt of all. Thus the moſt neceſſary Sacraments are the leaſt difficult. This is alſo true in natural Things. Would you go to Sea? Then take Boat upon a River, and you ſhall get at it inſenſibly and without Trouble. Would you go to God? Take this ſo very ſweet and eaſie way, and you ſhall ſhortly come at him, in a manner that will even ſurprize you. O if you would but make the Trial of this thing! you would ſoon be convinc'd that we have told you but a very little of it; for then your own Experience would go very far beyond all that we have ſaid. O! what are you afraid of? Why don't you readily caſt your ſelf into the

the Arms of Eſſential Love, who ſtretched them forth upon the Croſs only that he might receive you. What Danger can there be to truſt God, and purely to reſign your ſelf to Him? Ah! he will not deceive you, if it is not in a very agreeable manner, namely, by giving you much more than you expect; whereas they who expect all from themſelves, may come to hear that Rebuke which God giveth them by the Mouth of the Prophet *Iſaiah*, (w) *Thou haſt wearied thy ſelf in the Multiplicity of thy ways, and yet thou haſt never ſaid, let me reſt in Peace.*

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§. XIII.

Of Reſt before God.

THE Soul being arriv'd hither, hath no need of any other Preparation but of its *Reſt*. For here

(w) Iſ. 57. 10. vulg.

it

it is that the Presence of God begins to be infus'd and almost continual all the Day over, which is the great Fruit of Prayer, or rather the Continuation of it. Here the Soul possesseth in its inward Ground an unvaluable Happiness: It finds that God is more in it than itself. It hath but one only thing to do that it may find him, which is to sink down into it self. So soon as it shuts its bodily Eyes it finds it self taken up and placed in a State of Prayer: It stands amaz'd at so great a good, and there passes a Conversation within it which the outward Man doth not interrupt. That may be said of this manner of Prayer; which is spoken of Wisdom; (x) *All good things are come along with it.* For the Virtues flow sweetly into this Soul, which likewise practiseth them after so easy a manner, that they seem Natural to it. There is in such a Soul, a Seed or Spirit of Life, and [a Principle] of fecundity, which giveth it a facility to all that's good, and an insensibility to all that's Evil. Let it therefore con-

(x) Wisd. 7. 11.

tinue

tinue faithful in this State, and let it beware that it ſeek not after any other Diſpoſition whatſoever it may be, but its ſimple Reſt; whether for Confeſſion, or Communion, Action, or Prayer: there's nothing for it to do, but to ſuffer it ſelf to be fill'd with this Divine Effuſion. I don't ſpeak here of the neceſſary Preparations for the Sacraments, but only of the moſt perfect internal Diſpoſition in which one may be capable to receive them. And 'tis that which I juſt now mention'd.

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§. XIV.

Of the inward Silence.

THE Lord is in his holy Temple, let all the Earth keep Silence before him. (*y*) The reaſon why the inward Silence is ſo neceſſary is, becauſe the *WORD* being the Eternal and Eſſential Speech, to the end he may be re-

(*y*) Hab. 2. 20.

ceived

ceived into the Soul, there's a Diſpoſition neceſſarily requir'd which hath ſome Relation to that which he is. Now 'tis certain, that in order to receive the Word ſpoken, we muſt give ear and hearken. The Senſe of Hearing is made for receiving the Word, which is ſpoken or communicated to it. The Hearing is a Senſe that's more paſſive than active; it receiveth, but doth not communicate. The *WORD* being the Speech, which ſhould communicate it ſelf to the Soul, and revive and quicken it; it ought therefore to be attentive to this ſame *Word* which deſireth to ſpeak within it.

On this Account it is, that there are ſo many Places [in Scripture] which exhort us to hear God, and to be attentive to his Voice. We might eaſily obſerve a great many of 'em, but 'twill be ſufficient to relate theſe two or three. (z) *Hearken unto me all ye that are my People, and give ear unto my Voice O Nation that I have choſen!* And again, (a) *Hearken unto me all ye whom I bear in my Boſom, and*

(z) Iſa. 51. 4. (a) Chap. 46. 3 vulg.

whom

whom I carry in my Bowels! Again, (*b*) *Hearken, O my Daughter! Conſider, and encline thine ear, forget thy Kindred and thy Father's Houſe, ſo ſhall the King greatly deſire thy Beauty.*

We muſt needs hearken and be attentive to God, and forget our ſelves and all our own Intereſts. Theſe two Actions alone (or rather Paſſions, for this is a thing very paſſive) do attract the Love of that Beauty which he himſelf communicateth. External Silence is moſt neceſſary to improve and cultivate the Internal; and indeed 'tis impoſſible to become Inward or Spiritual without loving Silence and Retirement. God Himſelf tells us ſo by the Mouth of his Prophet, (*c*) *I will lead her into Solitude, and there will I ſpeak to her Heart.* How can one be inwardly taken up with God, and yet be outwardly cumbred about a thouſand Trifles? This is certainly impoſſible.

When your Weakneſs at any time has led you to be ſcatter'd and diſtracted abroad, you muſt take a little

(*b*) Pſ. 45. 10. (*c*) Hoſ. 2. 14. vulg.

turn inwards, to which you must always be faithful whensoever you are scatter'd and dissipated. It would be but a small matter to pray, and recollect ones self for half an Hour or an Hour, if we do not preserve the Unction and Spirit of Prayer all the Day long.

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§. XV.

Of Confession and Self-Examination.

AS Examination ought always to go before Confession, so ought it likewise to be conformable to the particular State of the Souls that do confess. Those we speak of here should lay themselves open before God, who will not be wanting to enlighten them, and make them to know the Nature of their Faults. But they must take care to examine themselves in Peace and Tranquility, expecting to have the Knowledge of their Sins given

given them from God, rather than from their own particular Scrutiny.

When we exert any ſtrong Endeavours in examining our ſelves, we are readily miſtaken: we believe *the Good to be Evil, and the Evil Good* (*d*) and Self-love moſt eaſily deceives us. But when we ſtand open to the Eyes of God, this Divine Sun diſcovers unto us the minuteſt Actions. And therefore we ought very much to abandon and reſign our ſelves to God, both for our Examination and Confeſſion.

So ſoon as the Soul is advanc'd to this manner of Prayer, God takes particular Care to reprove it for all its Faults whatſoever. It's no ſooner guilty of any Eſcape but it feels a certain Burning that rebukes it for this. Then is it that God makes ſo ſtrict an Enquiry, as ſuffereth not any thing to eſcape; and then the Soul has nothing to do but to turn it ſelf ſimply towards God, and to ſuffer the Pain and Correction which he inflicteth.

Now this Examination on God's part being continual, the Soul cannot

(*d*) Iſa. 5. 20.

any more examine it self: and if it be faithful in Resigning it self to God, it will be much better tried and inspected into by his Divine Light, than it can be by all its own Cares; and Experience will convince it that this is true.

As to *Confession*, you must necessarily take notice of one thing; *namely*, that the Souls which walk in this way will be often surpriz'd to find, that when they go to confess, and begin to declare their Sins, instead of the Act of Sorrow and Contrition for the same, which they were wont to make, a sweet and serene Love seizes their Heart. Those who are not acquainted with this matter would, it may be, withdraw from it to form an Act of Contrition, because they have heard say, that this is necessary, and so it is. But they don't perceive that they lose the true Contrition, which is this infus'd Love, infinitely greater than any thing they could do of themselves. They have here One eminent Act which comprehends the other Acts with more Perfection, tho' they han't these distinct and multiplied as before. Therefore let them not give themselves

ſelves the trouble to do any other thing when God acteth more excellently in them and with them.

To hate Sin in this manner, is to hate it as God doth. Again, The pureſt Love of any is that which God operates in the Soul. Let it not therefore be eager to act, but let it remain ſuch as it is, according to the Wiſeman's Counſel (*c*) *Put your Truſt in God, and continue in Reſt in the Place where he hath ſet you.*

The Soul will admire alſo that it ſhould forget its Defects and Failures, and have ſuch difficulty to remember them: yet it ought not to be troubled at this, for theſe two reaſons: One is, becauſe this Forgetfulneſs is a ſign of its Purification from the Fault; and the Excellency of this Degree conſiſteth in this; *namely*, to forget all that concerneth us, that we may remember *God* only. The other Reaſon is, that whenſoever one is obliged to confeſs, God faileth not to diſcover to the Soul its greateſt Faults: for then he maketh the Inſpection himſelf; and the Soul

(*c*) Ecclus. 11. 22.

will see, that by taking this way it shall better compass its End, than by all its own Endeavours.

This is not to be applied to the precedent Degrees or States, where the Soul being yet in the active part, may and ought to use its Care and Industry in performing all things, more or less, according to the measure of its Advancement. But as to the Souls that are come up to this degree, let them keep to what we have told them, and let them not change their simple and silent Exercises. Let them suffer God to act, and let them keep silence. God can't be better received, than by God.

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§. XVI.

Of Reading, and of Vocal Prayers.

THE manner of Reading in this Degree is, that as soon as one feels a little Recollection of Mind, he ought

ought to ceaſe, and remain in Stilneſs, reading but little, and not going on after he finds himſelf drawn into the Inward. The Soul is no ſooner call'd to the internal Silence, but it ought to forbear to burthen it ſelf with Vocal Prayers, except a very few; and even when it uſeth them, if it finds any difficulty in doing it, and feels it ſelf drawn to Silence, let it abide ſilent, and let it not ſtrive or uſe any Effort againſt it, unleſs the Prayers be ſuch as Obedience doth require: in this caſe they ought to be performed; but if they are not, let it leave them immediately, ſo ſoon as 'tis drawn inward, and that it finds a trouble to ſay them.

Let it not vex it ſelf, nor fetter it ſelf, but ſuffer it ſelf to be led by the Spirit of *God*, and then ſhall it fulfil all the other Devotions in a moſt eminent manner.

§. XVII.

Of Petitions.

HERE the Soul will find it self unable to make these Requests to God, which at other times it was wont to do with great Facility. But it ought not to be surpriz'd at this either; for then is it that the Spirit asketh for the Saints that which is good, and perfect, and agreable to the Will of God: *The Spirit assists us even in our Infirmities, because we know not what to pray for as we ought, nor how to pray; but the Spirit it self maketh Intercession for us with Groans which cannot be uttered.* (*d*) Moreover, I say, we must second God's Design, which is, chiefly to strip the Soul of its own Operations, that he may substitute his in their room. Suffer him then to do it, and tie not your self to any thing of your self, how good soever it may seem to be: for to be sure 'tis not then such

(*d*) Rom. 8. 26.

to

to you, if it turns you away from that which God desireth of you; but the Will of *God* is preferable to every other Good besides. Rid your self therefore of your own Interests, and live by Faith and Resignation: here it is that Faith begins to operate in the Soul by way of Eminency.

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§. XVIII.

Of Defects or Infirmities.

WHensoever we have fall'n into any Defect, or have at any time gone out of our way, we must immediately turn inwards; because this Fault having led us away from *God*, we ought as soon as possible to return unto him, and to suffer the Penitence which he doth impose himself.

It is a matter of great moment not to be vexed or disturb'd because of our Defects; for this Trouble or Disquiet cometh only from a secret Pride, or

from the Love and Eſteem of our ow
Excellence. We are uneaſie when w
feel what we are: but if we deſpon
or diſcourage our ſelves thereby, w
are weakned ſo much the more; an
the Reflection we make upon our Fault
begetteth in us a peeviſhneſs or frettin
which is worſe than the Fault it ſelf.

A Soul that's truly humble doth no
at all wonder at its Infirmities; an
the more it ſeeth it ſelf miſerable, th
more it reſigneth it ſelf to *God*, an
endeavoureth to keep cloſe to him
ſeeing the great need that it hath o
his Aſſiſtance. We ought to obſerv
this Conduct ſo much the more, tha
God himſelf hath told it us, ſaying, (e
*I will make thee to underſtand what tho
oughteſt to do; I will teach thee the wa
by which thou ſhouldſt go, and I will hav
my Eye continually upon thee for thy Guid*

* *Trouble and Diſquiet do but ſink and entangl
the Soul the more; whereas a vigorous Act of Con
verſion to the* Divine Preſence *within us, attende
with a lively Faith and an humble Confidence, do
infallibly extinguiſh the Temptation, diſpel th
Darkneſs, and overcome the Enemy. And on
that ſtands in this Preſence muſt needs hate Sin
as God hateth it.* (e) Pſ. 32. 8. vulg.

§. XIX

§. XIX.

Of Diſtractions and Temptations.

IN all our Diſtractions and Temptations, inſtead of combating them directly, (which would but encreaſe them, and take the Soul off from continually adhering to God, wherein its whole Buſineſs ſhould conſiſt) we ought ſimply to turn away our Eye from them, and draw nearer and nearer to God; even as a little Child, which ſeeing a Monſter, doth not ſtand to fight him, nor yet ſo much as to look at him, but meekly ſinketh down into its Mother's Boſom, where 'tis ſafe and ſecure. (*f*) *God is in the midſt of her*, [i. e. the Church, or the City of God] *ſhe ſhall not be moved: he will help her, and that right early.*

When we do otherwiſe, being we are weak; or while we think downright to attack our Enemies, we find our ſelves often wounded if not quite

(*f*) Pſ. 46. 5.

worſted

worſted by them: but continuing in the ſimple Preſence of God, we find our ſelves fortified all of a ſudden. This was *David*'s way, who ſaid, (*g*) *I have the Lord always preſent with me, and I ſhall not be moved: therefore my Heart rejoiceth, and my Fleſh alſo ſhall reſt in ſafety.* Again 'tis ſaid in *Exodus*, (*h*) *The Lord ſhall fight for you, and you ſhall keep your ſelves in Peace.*

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§. XX.

Of the Prayer of Invocation, and Adoration.

THE Prayer of Invocation ought to be both a Prayer and a Sacrifice. Prayer, according to St. *John*'s account of it, is an Incenſe, the Smoak whereof aſcends to God: and therefore 'tis ſaid in the *Revelation*, (*i*) that *the Angel held a Cenſer, in which was the*

(*g*) Pſ. 16. 8. (*h*) Chap. 14. 14. (*i*) Chap. 8. 3.

Perfume

Perfume of the Prayers of the Saints:

Prayer is the pouring out of the Heart in the Preſence of God: thus ſaid *Samuel*'s Mother, (*k*) *I have poured out my Heart in the Preſence of the Lord.* On this account the Prayer, which the Kings or Wiſemen poured forth at the Feet of the Child *Jeſus*, in the Stable of *Bethlehem*, was ſignified by the Incenſe which they offered. Prayer is nothing elſe but a warmth of Love, which melts and diſſolves the Soul, ſubtilizes it, and cauſes it to aſcend even to God: according as it is melted, ſo it gives forth its ſweet Smell, and this Smell cometh from the Love which burneth it.

This the Spouſe expreſſeth when ſhe ſaith, (*l*) *While my Beloved was on his Couch, my Spikenard ſent forth the Smell thereof.* The Couch is the Ground or Centre of the Soul: while God is there, and one knows how to dwell with him, and abide in his Preſence, this Preſence gradually melts and diſſolves the Hardneſs of this Soul, and being melted it ſends forth its Smell. And

(*k*) 1 Sam. 1. 15. (*l*) Cant. 1. 12. ulg.

there-

therefore the Beloved, seeing that *his Spouse was thus melted so soon as he had spoken*, (*m*) saith to her, *Who is this that ascendeth out of the Wilderness* [sicut virgula fumi] *as a little Cloud of Perfume?* (*n*)

Thus doth this Soul ascend to her God. But to this end it must suffer it self to be destroyed and annihilated by the force of Love. This is a state of Sacrifice essential to the Christian Religion, whereby the Soul suffereth its Destruction and Annihilation to render Homage to the Soveraignty of *God*; as 'tis written, (*o*) *God alone is Great, and he is honoured only by the Humble:* and the Destruction of our Being confesseth or acknowledgeth the supream Being of *God*. We must cease to be, that the Spirit of the Eternal *Word* may be in us. But to the end that he may come there, we must yeild up our Life to him, and die to our selves, that so he himself may live in us.

Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar is the Model of the Mystical State: for so soon as he cometh

(*m*) Cant. 5. 6. (*n*) Chap. 3 6. (*o*) Ecclus. 3. 21.

into

into it by the Words of Conſecration, the Subſtance of the Bread muſt yeild up to Him the Place, and no more muſt remain but the ſimple Accidents.* Juſt ſo muſt we yeild up our Beings to That of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and we muſt ceaſe to live, that ſo he may live in us; that we *being dead, our Life may be hid with him in God.* (p) *Paſs into me* (ſaith God) (q) *all ye who fervently deſire me.* How can we be ſaid to paſs into God? This cannot be done but by going out of our ſelves, that we may be loſt in him: and that will never be perform'd but through Annihilation, which is the true Prayer of Adoration that giveth *all Honour, and Glory, and Power unto God, for ever and evermore.* (r)

This Prayer is the Prayer of Truth; and this is *to worſhip the Father in Spirit and in Truth:* (s) In *Spirit*, becauſe we are thereby drawn from our humane and carnal manner of acting, to enter into the Purity of the Spirit which prayeth in us. And *in Truth*,

* *An Illuſtration according to the Common Sentiments of thoſe of her own Religion.*

(p) Col 3. 3. (q) Ecclus. 24. 26. (r) Rev. 5. 13. (s) Jo. 4. 23.

becauſe

because the Soul is thereby placed in the Truth of the ALL of GOD, and of the NOTHING of *the Creature*.

There are only these two Truths the *All* and the *Nothing*: all the rest is a Lie. We cannot honour *God's All* but by our own *Annihilation*; and we are no sooner annihilated, than *God* who allows not any thing to be empty without filling it, doth fill us with himself.

O did we but know the great Advantages which accrue to the Soul from this Prayer, we would hardly do any thing else! This is *the Pearl of Price*. This is *the hidden Treasure*. (*t*) He that findeth it most cheerfully selleth all that he hath to purchase it. This is *the River of living Water, which bubbles up unto Eternal Life*. (*v*) This is *to worship God in Spirit and in Truth*: and This is to practise the purest Maxims of the Gospel.

Doth not *Jesus Christ* assure us, (*u*) that *the Kingdom of God is within us*? This Kingdom is understood two ways

(*t*) Mat. 13. 44, 45. (*v*) Jo. 4. 14. & 7.
(*u*) Luke 17. 21.

On

One is, when God is ſo much Maſter of us, that nothing doth any more reſiſt him: then our Interiour is truly his Kingdom. The other is, when poſſeſſing *God*, who is the ſoveraign Good, we poſſeſs the Kingdom of God, which is the height of Felicity, and the very End for which we were created; according as 'tis ſaid, *to ſerve God is to Reign.* The End for which we were created is, to enjoy God even in this Life; and yet Men think not at all of it.

§. XXI.

That one acts more vigorouſly and more nobly by this manner of Prayer than by any other.

WHEN ſome Perſons hear of the Prayer of Silence, they roundleſly imagine, that therein the Soul remains Stupid, Lifeleſs, and without Action. But certain it is, that

that there the Soul acteth more nobly and with more Enlargement, than ever it did hitherto; ſeeing in this degree of Prayer 'tis moved by *God* himſelf, and it acteth by his Spirit. St. *Paul* would have us ſuffer our ſelves *to be led by the Spirit of God.* (*w*)

We don't ſay, that the Soul ought not to act at all, but only that it ought to act dependently on the Movement of Grace. This is admirably repreſented in the Prophet *Ezekiel's* Viſion of the Wheels (*x*) *The Wheels*, which he ſaw, *had the Spirit of Life, and they went whitherſoever that Spirit led them; they were lifted up, or ſtood ſtill, according as they were moved, for the Spirit of Life was in them; but they never return'd back.* Thus ought it to be with the Soul; It ſhould ſuffer it ſelf to be moved and led by the quickning Spirit that's in it, following ſtill the Movement of its Action, and never following any other. But this Motion never enclines it to go back; that is, either to reflect upon the Creature, or to bend towards it ſelf; but to go

(*w*) *Rom.* 8. 14. (*x*) *Chap.* 1. 15, 21.

always

always ſtreight before it, advancing continually towards its end.

This Action of the Soul is an Action full of Stilneſs and Repoſe. When it acteth by it ſelf, it acteth with Violence and Labour, and hereby it diſtinguiſheth then its own Action the better. But when it acteth dependently on the Spirit of Grace, its Action is ſo free, ſo eaſie, and ſo natural, that it ſeemeth as if it acted not at all. *He hath brought me forth into a large Place, he hath delivered me becauſe he loved me.* (y)

So ſoon as the Soul hath got into its Central Bent and Tendency, that is to ſay, return'd within it ſelf by Recollection, from that very Moment it enters into a very ſtrong Action, which is the Motion or Courſe of the Soul towards its Centre which attracts it; and which infinitely ſurpaſſeth the Nimbleneſs of all other Actions, nothing coming near the Swiftneſs of the Central Tendency. This then is an Action, but an Action ſo very noble, ſo quiet, ſo peaceable, as it ſeemeth to the Soul that it doth not

(y) *Pſal.* 18. 19.

act

act at all, becauſe it acteth as 'twere naturally, that is, inſenſibly.

While a Wheel moveth ſlowly, 'tis eaſie to perceive it well; but while it goeth very ſwiftly, we can't diſtinguiſh any thing in it; juſt ſo the Soul which dwelleth with God in Stilneſs, hath an infinitely noble and elevated ſort of Action, but withal an Action that's moſt quiet and peaceable. The more the Soul is in Peace, the more ſwiftly ſtill it runneth; becauſe 'tis wholly reſigned to the Spirit that moveth it, and maketh it act.

This Spirit is no other than *God*, who draweth us, and drawing us maketh us to run unto him: this the Divine Lover knew very well when ſhe ſaid, (z) *Draw me, and we will run.* Draw me, O my Divine Centre, by the profoundeſt Deep of my Being, and by this thy Attraction the Powers and Senſes ſhall all run unto thee! This Attraction alone is both an Ointment which healeth, and a Perfume which draweth us; *we will run* (ſaith ſhe) *becauſe of the Smell of thy Perfumes.*

(z) *Cant.* 1. 4. vulg.

'Tis

'Tis a moſt powerful attractive Virtue, yet a Virtue which the Soul follows moſt freely, and which being equally ſtrong and ſweet, both draws by its Force, and charms by its Sweetneſs. *Draw me* (ſaith the Spouſe) *and we will run.* She ſpeaketh of her ſelf, and to her ſelf. *Draw me*, behold the Unity of the Centre which is attracted: *we will run*, behold the Running and Correſpondence of all the Powers and Senſes, which follow the Attraction of the inward Ground of the Soul.

Therefore we don't in the leaſt affirm that we ought to remain idle or without Action, but that we ought to act only in dependance on the Spirit of *God*, which ſhould animate us, ſince 'tis only *in him, and by him, that we live, that we act, and that we are.* (*a*) This meek Dependance upon the Spirit of God is abſolutely neceſſary, and maketh the Soul arrive in a little time to the Simplicity and Unity in which it was created. It was created one and ſimple, like unto God, that it

(*a*) *Acts* 17. 28.

might

might attain the end of its Creation. Therefore we must forsake the Multiplicity of our Actions, that we may enter into the Simplicity and Unity of God, *in whose Image we were created* (*b*) *The Spirit of God is one only and manifold* [or multiplied] (*c*) yet his Unity hindreth not at all his Multiplicity. We enter into his Unity when we are united to his Spirit, as having thereby one and the same Spirit with him: and without departing from this Unity, we are multiplied outwardly, when we do the Will of God in what regardeth the outward. So that God acting infinitely, and we suffering our selves to be led by his Spirit, do act much more than we could do by our own Activity.

We must suffer our selves to be guided by the Eternal Wisdom: *this Wisdom is more moving or active than the most moveable things.* [*Omnibus Mobilibus mobilior est Sapientia.*] Let us then abide in the Dependance of its Action, and we shall act indeed most strongly. *By the WORD were*

(*b*) Gen. 1. 27. (*c*) Wisd. 7. 22. (*d*) Ver. 2

things made, and without him was not any thing made that was made (*e*). God created us at firſt after his own Image and Likeneſs, and he inſpireth into us the Spirit of the *Word*, by (*f*) *that Breath of Life* which he gave us when we were form'd to God's Image by the Participation of this Life of the *Word*, who is the Image of his Father: now this Life is one, ſimple, pure, intimate and always fruitful. The Devil having ſpoil'd and diſfigured this beautiful Image by Sin, it was neceſſary that the ſame *Word*, whoſe Spirit was breath'd into us at our Creation, ſhould come to reſtore it. It was needful it ſhould be *He*, becauſe He is the Eſſential Image of his Father, and the [defaced] Image is not repaired by acting, but in being paſſive to the Action of him who ſeeketh to repair it.

Our Action therefore ought only to be, to put our ſelves in a Condition to ſuffer God's acting upon us, and to give place unto the WORD, to draw over again his Image in us. An Image

(*e*) Jo. 1. 3. (*f*) *Gen.* 2. 7.

that

that ſhould always be moving, would hinder the Painter from taking a true Copy by it. All the Motions which we make by our own Spirit, do hinder this admirable Painter to work, and do occaſion the making imperfect Sroakes. We muſt needs therefore remain in Peace, not moving our ſelves but when he moveth us. *Jeſus Chriſt hath the Life in himſelf (g)* and every thing that is to live muſt receive the Life from him. The Spirit of this Divine Life and Motion is the Spirit of the Church. Is the Church idle, unactive, barren, and unfruitful? She acteth, but ſhe acteth by dependance on the Spirit of God, which moveth Her, and governeth Her. Now the Spirit of the Church ought to be the ſame in Her Members that it is in her ſelf. Therefore to the end the Members of the Church may be in the Spirit of the Church, they muſt always be in the Spirit of the Divine Life and Motion.

That this Action or Motion is the more noble, is a Matter without Diſ-

(g) Jo. 5. 26.

pute

pute, for certainly things have nothing of Value or Worth, but in ſo far as the Principle whence they proceed is Noble, Great, and High. The Actions which are done by a Divine Principle are Divine Actions; whereas the Actions of the Creature, how good ſoever they may ſeem to be, are only Humane, or at the very beſt, but virtuous Actions, even when they are aſſiſted by Grace. *Jeſus Chriſt* ſaith, that He hath the *Life* in himſelf: All the other Beings have only a borrowed Life, but the WORD hath the Life in himſelf; and being communicative of his Nature, he deſireth to communicate it to Men. Therefore we muſt give place unto this Life, that it may flow into us; which cannot be done but by the Evacuation and Ruine of the Life of *Adam*, and our own natural Action, as St. *Paul* aſſures us, (*h*) *If any one then be in Chriſt Jeſus, he is a new Creature: all that was old is done away; all is become new.* Which cannot be done but by the Death of our own Activity, to the end that God may act in us, and his

(*h*) 1 Cor. 5. 17.

Action may be ſubſtituted in the plac of ours.

It is not therefore pretended, tha Men ſhould not act at all; but onl that they ſhould act by dependance o the Spirit of God, for the giving wa to his Action, to take the place of tha of the Creature. Which cannot b done but by the Creature's Conſent and the Creature can't give this Con ſent, but by moderating its Activity to give way by little and little to God Operation to ſucceed in its ſtead.

Jeſus Chriſt lets us ſee in the Goſpe this ſame Conduct: *Martha* did goo things, but he reprov'd her, becau ſhe did them in her own Spirit. Th Spirit of Man is turbulent and reſtleſ and therefore it doth but little, th it would appear to do a great dea *Martha, Martha,* ſaid *Chriſt,* (*i*) y *diſquiet and torment your ſelf with a gre many things; but after all, there's b one thing needful.* Mary *hath choſen t better part, which ſhall not be taken fr her.*

(*i*) Luk. 10. 41, 42.

Wh

What is it that *Mary* hath choſen? It is Peace, Stilneſs, and Reſt. She ceaſeth to act in appearance, that ſhe may ſuffer her ſelf to be acted by the Spirit of *Jeſus Chriſt*; ſhe ceaſeth to live, that ſo *Jeſus Chriſt* may live in her: and therefore 'tis ſo very neceſſary to renounce ones ſelf and ones own Operations, truly to follow *Jeſus Chriſt*: for we can never follow *Jeſus Chriſt* unleſs we are animated with his Spirit. Now that the Spirit of *Chriſt* may come into us, 'tis neceſſary that our own Spirit give place unto him. *Whoſoever doth cleave* [or *adhere*] *to the Lord*, (ſaith St. *Paul*) (*k*) *becometh one Spirit with him.* And *David* ſaid, (*l*) that *It was good for him to adhere unto God, and to put his whole Confidence in him.* What is this Adheſion? it is a beginning of Union.

This Union begins, continues, is finiſh'd, and perfected. The Beginning of our Union is a ſtrong Deſire or Inclination towards God. When the Soul is introverted or turned into its ſelf, in the manner above expreſs'd, it

(*k*) 1 Cor. 6. 17. (*l*) Pſ 73. 28. vulg.

is in a central Tendency, and hath a ſtrong Inclination to Union. This Tendency is the Beginning. Afterward it adhereth; which it doth when it approacheth nearer to God. Then it is united with him: and thereafter it becometh One; which is to b made one Spirit with him. And then it is that this Spirit, which went forth from *God*, doth return back into its End.

We muſt therefore neceſſarily enter into this way, which is the Divine Motion, and the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt. St. *Paul* ſaith, (*m*) that *No Man is Jeſus Chriſt's, if he have not his Spirit.* That then we may be *Chriſt's*, we muſt ſuffer our ſelves to be fill'd with *His* Spirit, and to this end to be emptied of our own: there's a Neceſſity for our own to be evacuated. St. *Paul* in the ſame place (*n*) proves the Neceſſity of this Divine Motion when he ſaith, *All they that are acted by the Spirit of God, are the Children of God.* The Spirit of the Divine Filiation, is therefore the Spirit of the Divine Motion: hence the ſame Apoſtle adds, (*o*) *The Spirit*

(*m*) Rom. 8. 9. (*n*) Ver. 14. (*o*) Ver. 15

which

which ye have received is not a Spirit of Servitude to make you live in fear: but 'tis the Spirit of God's Children, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!

This Spirit is no other but the Spirit of *Chriſt*, by which we participate in his Filiation or Sonſhip; and *this Spirit doth it ſelf bear witneſs to ours, that we are the Children of God* (*p*). So ſoon as the Soul leaveth and giveth up it ſelf to be moved by the Spirit of *God*, it experimenteth in it ſelf the Witneſs of this Divine Filiation: and this Witneſs doth fill it with ſo much the more Joy, as it makes it the more clearly to ſee, that *it is call'd to the Liberty of God's Children, and that the Spirit which it hath received, is not a Spirit of Servitude, but of Liberty.* Then doth the Soul feel that it acteth freely and ſweetly, tho' ſtrongly and infallibly.

The Spirit of this Divine Motion is ſo neceſſary for all things, that St. *Paul* in the ſame place foundeth this Neceſſity upon our Ignorance in the things that we pray for: *The Spirit*, ſaith he, *helpeth our Infirmities; for we*

(*p*) Rom. 8. 16.

know not what to pray for, nor how to pray as we ought: but the Spirit it self prayeth for us with Groanings which are unutterable. This is positive; if we know not what we want, nor yet how to pray for any thing that's necessary for us, as we ought; and if the Spirit that's in us, to whose Motion we give up our selves, must needs ask and pray for us, ought we not then to let this Spirit do it? He doth it with Groanings which are unutterable. This Spirit is the Spirit of the WORD, which is always heard, as he said himself; (q) *I know that thou hearest me always.* Did we let this Spirit pray and interceed in us, we should be always heard. And why so? Teach us this, thou Great Apostle, Mystical Doctor, and Master of the Interiour Life! It is (addeth St. *Paul*) (r) *because he that searcheth the Hearts, knows what the Spirit desireth, forasmuch as he intercedeth according to God for the Saints.* That is to say, because this Spirit asketh only for that which is conformable to the Will of God. The Will of God is, that we

(q) Jo. 11. 42. (r) Rom. 8. 27.

may

may be ſaved, & that we may be perfect. He therefore asks, or interceeds for that which is neceſſary for our Perfection.

Why then after all this do we oppreſs our ſelves with ſuperfluous Cares, and weary out our Lives in the Multiplicity of our own Ways, without ever ſaying, *Let us reſt in Peace? God* himſelf inviteth us to reſt from all our Labours and Diſquiets, and to ſtay our ſelves on him: nay, he complaineth in the Prophet *Iſaiah*, (*s*) with an unconceiveable Goodneſs, that we employ the Soul's Strength, its Riches and its Treaſure, in a Thouſand exteriour things, ſeeing that there's ſo very little to be done that we may enjoy the Infinite Good-things which we deſire and pretend to. *Wherefore do ye ſpend your Money for that which cannot nouriſh you? and your Labour for that which can't ſatisfie you? Hearken unto me attentively, feed your ſelves with the good Nouriſhment which I do give you: and your Soul being made fat therewith, ſhall indeed rejoice.*

O that Men did but know what a Happineſs it is to hearken unto God in

(*s*) Chap. 55. 2.

this manner, and how exceedingly the Soul is thereby ſtrengthned! *All Fleſh muſt needs be ſilent in the Preſence of the Lord* (*t*). All muſt ceaſe and be ſtill ſo ſoon as he appeareth. Now God, to oblige us ſtill further to reſign our ſelves without any Reſerve, aſſureth us in the ſame Prophet, (*v*) that we need not be afraid of any thing in Giving up our ſelves to him; becauſe He taketh a very particular Care of us. *Can a Mother forget her own Child*, (ſaith God) *and have no Compaſſion on the Son whom ſhe hath conceiv'd in her Bowels? But even though ſhe ſhould forget, yet will not I ever forget you.* O Bleſſed Words! full of Divine Conſolation! who ſhall be any longer afraid to reſign himſelf entirely to the Guidance of God?

(*t*) Zach. 2. 13. (*v*) Iſa. 49. 15.

§. XXII.

§. XXII.

Of Internal Acts.

THE Acts of Man are either External or Internal. The External are theſe that appear outwardly with regard to ſome ſenſible Object, and which have no other Moral Goodneſs or Evil, but what they receive from the Internal Principle from whence they proceed.

It is not of theſe that I intend to ſpeak, but only of the Internal Acts which are certain Actions of the Soul, whereby it applieth it ſelf inwardly to ſome Objects, or elſe withdraweth it ſelf from others.

When being applied to *God*, I will perform an Act of another Nature, I do thereby withdraw from *God*, and turn toward Created things more or leſs, according as my Act is more or leſs ſtrong. If being turn'd toward the Creature, I will return to God, I

must needs make an Act to withdraw me from this Creature, and to turn me towards *God:* and so the more perfect the Act is, the more entire is the Conversion. Until that I be perfectly converted, I have need of many Acts to turn me towards *God:* Some do it all at once, others do it by little and little; but my Act ought to carry me to turn always unto God, exercising all the Strength of my Soul for him, according to the Counsel of the Son of *Syrach*, (*u*) *Reunite all the Motions of thy Heart in the Holiness of God.* And as *David* did (*w*) *I will keep my whole Strength for thee:* which is done by entring strongly into ones self; as saith the Scripture (*x*) *Return to your Heart*; for we have wandred from our Heart by Sin; and therefore God asketh but our Heart, saying (*y*) *My Son give me thy Heart, and let thine Eyes be always fix'd upon my Ways.* To give ones Heart to God, is to have at all times the Eye, the Force and Vigor of the Soul fix'd upon him, and cleaving unto

(*u*) *Chap* 30 24 (*w*) *Psal.* 58. 10. vulg.
(*x*) *Isa.* 46. 8. vulg. (*y*) *Prov.* 23. 26.

him.

him, that one may perfectly follow his Will in all things. Wherefore, ſo ſoon as any one hath applied his Heart unto God, he muſt always remain thus turn'd and directed towards him.

But the Spirit of Man being light and frail, and the Soul being accuſtom'd to be turned outwards, is eaſily diverted and diſſipated; and therefore ſo ſoon as it perceives it ſelf to be withdrawn and turned towards outwards things, it muſt, by a ſimple Act, which is, a Return towards God, recover and replace it ſelf in him: then its Act ſubſiſteth ſo long as its Converſion laſteth, by the powerful Influence of its returning to God by a ſimple and unfeigned Return. And ſeeing ſeveral repeated Acts make an Habit, the Soul by this means contracteth the Habit of Converſion, and of an *Act*, which afterwards becometh as 'twere continued and habitual unto it.

And then the Soul ought not to perplex it ſelf in ſeeking to form this Act, becauſe it is already form'd and ſubſiſts; nay, it cannot do it, without finding very great Difficulty therein: and it finds likewiſe that hereby it is drawn

drawn from its proper State, under pretext of ſeeking after this Act, which is a thing it ought never to do; ſince that the Act ſubſiſts in the Habit, and the Soul is then in an habitual Converſion and in an habitual Love. Men ſeek after one Act by ſeveral other Acts, inſtead of keeping themſelves fix'd by a ſimple Act to *God* alone.

One may obſerve, how that ſometimes he can with great eaſe make ſuch Acts diſtinctly, but ſimply; which is a Sign that he was turned aſide, and that now he enters again into his Heart, after that he had wandred from it. But let him take Care to remain there in Peace, now that he is returned to it. When therefore any one thinks that he ought not to form any Acts, he is much miſtaken, for he forms always ſome Acts: but every one ought to form them according to the meaſure of his Degree or Advancement.

To clear up this place fully, which indeed occaſions the greateſt Difficulty of the moſt part of Spiritual Perſons, for want of comprehending it; you muſt know that ſome Acts are tranſient and

and diſtinct, and others are continued; again, ſome Acts are direct, and others are reflex. All cannot form the firſt, neither are all in the proper State of forming the ſecond. The firſt ſort of Acts ought to be made by the Perſons who are turned aſide: They ought to turn themſelves again by an Act which is diſtinguiſh'd, and which ſhould be more or leſs ſtrong, according as the Diverſion or Turning aſide was greater or ſmaller; ſo that when the Departure or Straying is but ſlight, one of the moſt ſimple Acts is ſufficient.

I call the *Continued Act*, that whereby the Soul is wholly turned towards its God by a direct Act, which it reneweth not, unleſs it be interrupted, but which always ſubſiſteth. The Soul, I ſay, being turned after this manner, is indeed in the *Love*, and dwelleth therein. *And he who dwelleth in the Love, dwelleth in God.* (z) Then the Soul hath entred as 'twere into the Habit of the Act, and repoſeth it ſelf in this very Act: yet its Repoſe is not idle; for then it hath a perpetually

(z) 1 Jo. 4. 16.

ſubſiſtent

ſubſiſtent Act, which is a ſweet ſinking down, or Ingulfment into God, where God attracteth it always more ſtrongly; and it following this ſo very powerful Attraction, and abiding in his Love and in his Charity, is always more and more ingulf'd and ſwallowed up in this ſame Love; and here it hath an Action infinitely more ſtrong, more vigorous, and more prompt, than the Act which ſerves only to form its Return.

Now the Soul which is in this profound and ſtrong Act, being entirely turned towards its God, hath not any Perception of this Act, becauſe it is Direct and not Reflex. Which is the Reaſon that this Perſon not explaining himſelf well, ſaith, that he forms not any Acts: but it is a miſtake, for he never did any either better or more active. Let him ſay rather, I don't now diſtinguiſh any Acts: and not, I don't do any Acts. 'Tis true, he doth not do them by himſelf, but he is drawn, and he followeth that which draweth him. *Love* is the Weight which ſinketh him down, as a Perſon falling into the Sea ſinketh, and would

ſink

ſink even to infinity, if the Sea were infinite: and without the Perception of this Sinking, he would deſcend into the loweſt Deep, with an incredible Swiftneſs.

It is therefore to ſpeak improperly to ſay, that one doth no Acts. All do Acts, but all do them not after the ſame manner; and the Miſtake cometh of this, that as many as know they muſt do Acts, would do them diſtinct and ſenſible. Which indeed cannot be; for the ſenſible ones are for Beginners, and the others are for advanced Souls. To ſtop in the firſt Acts, which are weak, and advance but little, is to deprive ones ſelf of the laſt. So in like manner, to endeavour to do the laſt Acts without having paſſed through the firſt, were another no leſs conſiderable Error.

All things then ought to be done in their proper ſeaſon. Every State hath its Beginning, its Progreſs, and its End. If one meant always to ſtop at the beginning, he would be groſly miſtaken indeed. There's no Art which hath not its Progreſs. At the Beginning there muſt be a labouring with

with Diligence and Toil, but afterward there muſt be an enjoying of the Fruit of ones Labour. When the Veſſel is in the Port, the Mariners have Difficulty to clear her thence to get her into the main Sea: but afterwards they eaſily turn her to whatever Hand they pleaſe. In like manner, while the Soul is yet in Sin and in the Creatures, there's much Strugling and Toil requir'd to draw it out thence; there muſt be an entire undoing of the Cords which hold it bound; then labouring by the Means of ſtrong and vigorous Acts, there muſt be an Endeavour to draw the Soul inwards, removing it by little and little from its own Port, and in removing it from thence, it is turned inwards, or to the Interiour, which is the place whereto we deſire to travel.

When the Veſſel is turned after this manner, proportionably as ſhe advanceth in the Sea, ſhe is removed from the Land: and the further ſhe is removed from the Land, the leſs need is there of any Labour to draw her along. At laſt they begin to ſail moſt pleaſantly, and the Veſſel runs ſo mightily, that

that they muſt quit the Oars, which are now become uſeleſs. What doth the Pilot then? He contenteth himſelf to ſpread the Sails, and hold the Rudder. To ſpread the Sails, is to make the Prayer of ſimple expoſition or laying ones ſelf open before *God*, in order to be moved by his Spirit. To hold the Rudder, is to keep our Heart from wandring out of the right Path, recalling it gently, and guiding it according to the Motion of the Spirit of *God*, which by degrees getteth Poſſeſſion of the Heart, even as the Wind cometh by little and little to fill the Sails and drive on the Veſſel. So long as the Ship hath the Wind fair, the Pilot and Mariners ceaſe from their Labour, and repoſe themſelves. What a Progreſs do they now make without fatiguing themſelves? They make more way in one Hour in repoſing themſelves after this manner, and leaving the Veſſel to be led by the Wind, than they could do in a great deal of time by all their firſt Toilings and Pains; and if they would then row, beſides that they ſhould greatly fatigue themſelves, their

their Labour would be quite uſeleſs, and they would retard the Veſſel.

This is the very Conduct which we ought to obſerve in our Interiour Life, and by acting in this manner we ſhall advance more in a little time by the Divine Motion, than we can do any other way by a great many of our own Struglings and Efforts. If any would take this way, they ſhould find it the eaſieſt of the World.

When the Wind is contrary and the Storm great, the Anchor muſt be caſt into the Sea, to ſtop the Veſſel. This Anchor is no other thing but Confidence in God, and Hope in his Goodneſs, waiting in Patience for the Calm, and for fair Weather, and that the Wind may turn about favourable; as did *David: I have waited* (ſaith he)* *for the Lord with great Patience, and he hath at laſt humbled himſelf even to me.* We muſt therefore give up and reſign our ſelves to the Spirit of God, leaving our ſelves to be guided by his Motions.

* Pſ. 40. 1.

§. XXIII.

§. XXIII.

An Admonition to Paſtors and Preachers.

IF as many as labour after the Conqueſt of Souls, did endeavour to reach and gain them by the Heart, putting them immediately into the Prayer of Silence, and into the Inward Life, they would make numberleſs and laſting Converſions. But ſo long as they go the other way to work, namely, by that which is External; and that inſtead of drawing Souls to Jeſus Chriſt, by the Occupation of the Heart in him, they do only load them with a thouſand Precepts for the outward Exerciſes; there comes but very little Fruit thereof, and even that little endureth not.

If the Country Miniſters had the Zeal to inſtruct their Pariſhioners after this manner, the Shepherds in keeping their Flocks, might have the Spirit of the ancient Anchorites; and the

the Ploughmen in tilling their Ground, might entertain themselves in a blessed Intercourse with God: the Tradesmen and Labourers that are spending themselves with Toil, might gather from hence everlasting Fruits: all the Vices might be banish'd in a little time, and their whole Parish might become spiritual.

Ah! when the Heart is once gained, all the rest is easily corrected. Thence it is that God principally asketh the Heart. By this Method alone, the Drunkennesses, the Blasphemies, the Uncleannesses, the Enmities, the Thefts, and the whole Train of Evils, which among Country People do so commonly reign, might be quite cut off and taken away. *Christ* might reign peaceably over all, and the Face of the Church might be renewed in every Place. Heresies are entred into the World through the Loss of the Interiour, [or, of the Life of God in the Soul] and if this Interiour were establish'd again, they would suddenly come to ruine. Error doth not get the Possession of Souls but by the want of Faith and of Prayer: if we taught

our

our wandring Brethren to believe ſimply, and to pray, inſtead of diſputing a great deal with them, we might bring them back gently to God.

O the ineſtimable Loſſes that are ſuſtain'd by the neglect of the Interiour! O what Account have thoſe Perſons that have the Charge of Souls to give to God, for not having diſcover'd this hidden Treaſure to all them whom they ſerve by the Miniſtry of the Word!

They excuſe themſelves under the pretext, that there is Danger in this way, or that ſimple and plain Folk are incapable of the things of the Spirit. But the Oracle of Truth aſſures us of the contrary, ſaying, (*a*) *The Lord placeth his Affection on thoſe who walk in Simplicity.* And what Danger can there be to walk in the one only Way, which is JESUS CHRIST, giving our ſelves entirely to Him, beholding Him continually, putting our whole Confidence in his Grace, and tending with all our Strength and Might to his pureſt Love?

So far is it from being true, that the Simple [the Plain and the Ignorant]

(*a*) Prov. 12. 22.

are

are incapable of this Perfection, that they are indeed the more fit for it; because they are more Docile, more Humble, and more Innocent; and becauſe not being uſed to Reaſoning, they don't ſo much adhere to their own Judgments: Being moreover without Knowledge, they let themſelves be moved and acted more eaſily by the Spirit of God; whereas others, who are rack'd and blinded thro' an Opinion of their own Sufficiency, do reſiſt a great deal more the Divine Inſpiration. Thus God declareth to us, that 'tis to the Little Ones that he gives the Underſtanding of his Law: *The Entrance of thy Word* (ſaith *David*) (*b*) *giveth Light, it giveth Underſtanding to the Simple.* He affirmeth likewiſe, (*c*) that he loveth *to converſe familiarly with the ſimple ones. The Lord preſerveth the Simple; I was reduced to Extremity, and he ſaved me.* (*d*) Let the ſpiritual Fathers then take heed, not to hinder the little Children from coming to *Chriſt. Suffer theſe little Children* (ſaid He to

(*b*) Pſ. 119. 130. (*c*) Prov. 3. 32. (*d*) Pſ. 116. 6.

his

his Apoſtles) (e) *to come unto me; for it is unto them that the Kingdom of Heaven doth belong.* Jeſus Chriſt ſaid not this to the Apoſtles, but becauſe they would have hindred the Children from coming unto Him. Oftentimes Men apply the Remedy to the Body, and mean while the Diſeaſe is at the Heart.

The great Reaſon why there is ſo little ſucceſs in the Reformation of Men, and eſpecially of labouring Perſons, is, becauſe they [the Miniſters] ſet about it in the Exteriour, or from without; and becauſe all that they can do herein paſſeth quickly away. But if they gave them immediately the Key of the Interiour, that which is without would be afterward Reformed, with a facility altogether natural. Now this is moſt eaſie, namely, to teach them to ſeek God in their Hearts, to think upon Him, to return unto Him there whenever they find themſelves diſtracted, to do all things, and to ſuffer all things with a deſign to pleaſe Him: This is to apply them to the Fountain of all the Graces, and to make them

(e) Mat. 19. 14.

find

" find therein all that's neceſſary for
" their Sanctification.

I obteſt and conjure you, O all ye who ſerve in the Cure of Souls, to put them immediately into this Way, which is *Jeſus Chriſt*; and 'tis He who doth conjure you this, by all the Blood which He hath ſhed for theſe Souls whom He hath entruſted to you. *Speak ye to the Heart of Jeruſalem*, (*f*) O ye Diſpenſers of his Graces! O ye Preachers of his Word! O ye Miniſters of his Sacraments! Eſtabliſh his Kingdom; and that you may eſtabliſh it truly, make Him to reign over Hearts. For as it is the Heart alone which can oppoſe it ſelf to his Empire; ſo is it by the total ſubjection of the Heart that his Soveraignty is the moſt honoured. *Give ye Glory to the Holiness of God, and He ſhall become your Sanctification* (*g*) Make ye particular *Catechiſms*, that may teach your People how to pray, not by Ratiocination, nor by Method (the ſimple ones not being capable of this;) but a Prayer of the Heart, and not of the Head; a Pray-

(*f*) Iſa. 40. 2. (*g*) Iſa. 8. 13.

of the Spirit of God, and not of Man's Invention.

Alas! Men will be making ſtudied Prayers; and while they ſeek to adjuſt them too much, they render them impoſſible. They have driven away the Children from the beſt of all Fathers, while they had a mind to teach them a Language that was too polite. Go ye, poor Children, ſpeak to your Heavenly Father in your own Language, how barbarous and rude ſoever it may be; it is not ſo to Him. A Father loveth rather a Diſcourſe, which Love and Reſpect may put into Diſorder, foraſmuch as he ſeeth that this ſometh from the Heart; than an Hangue that is dry, vain and barren, tho' never ſo well ſtudied. O how nightily do the pure Glances and ooks of Love charm him, and raviſh im! They expreſs infinitely more han all Language and all Ratiocina-on.

Men having endeavour'd to teach w to love methodically even *Love* it f, have loſt in a great meaſure this ery Love. O how little neceſſary it to teach an Art of Loving! The

Language of Love is barbarous to him who loveth not, but it is very natural to him that loveth: and one can never better learn how to love God, than in loving Him. In this Employ oft-times the most dull become the most expert, because they walk therein more simply and more cordially. The Spirit of God hath no need of our Regulations, He taketh up Shepherds, when he pleaseth, to make of them Prophets: and so far is He from shutting the Palace of Prayer against any one, as some do imagine, that he leaveth, on the contrary, all the Gates thereof open to all; and *Wisdom* hath order to cry in the publick Places: *Whoso is simple, let him come unto Me.* (*h*) And she saith unto them that are without Understanding, (*i*) *Come ye, eat of the Bread which I give you, and drink of the Wine which I have prepar'd you.* Doth not Jesus Christ thank his Father, (*k*) *that He hath hidden his Secrets from the Wise, and hath revealed them to the Little Ones*

(*h*) Prov. 9. 4. (*i*) Ver. 5. (*k*) Mat. 11. 25

§. XXIV.

What is the ſafeſt Method to arrive at the Divine Union.

IT is impoſſible to arrive at the Divine Union only by the Way of Meditation, or even of the Affections; or by any luminous and diſtinctly comprehended Prayer whatſoever. There are ſeveral Reaſons for it: Behold here the Principal.

In the *firſt* place, according to the Scripture, (*l*) *No Man ſhall ſee God ſo long as he is Living.* Now all the Exerciſe of diſcurſive Prayer, or even of active Contemplation, conſider'd as an End, and not as a Diſpoſition to the Paſſive, are living Exerciſes, whereby we cannot ſee God; that is to ſay, be united to Him. 'Tis neceſſary, that whatever is of Man, and of his own Induſtry, how noble and exalted ſoever it may be; 'tis neceſſary, I ſay, that

(*l*) Exod. 33. 20.

all this should die. St. *John* relateth, (*m*) that *in Heaven there was a great Silence.* Heaven represents the Ground and the Centre of the Soul, where all must be in Silence, while the Majesty of *God* appears therein. Whatever is of our own Efforts or Strivings, and of Propriety, ought to be destroyed; because nothing is opposite to God but Propriety, and all the Malignity of Man is in this Propriety, as in the Source of its evil Nature: So that the more any Soul loseth its Propriety, the more pure it becometh; and what would be a defect to a Soul living to its self, is not so any more, by reason of the Purity and Innocence which it hath contracted, since it lost its Proprieties, which caused the Unlikeness betwixt God and the Soul.

Secondly, To unite two things so opposite, as are the Purity of God and the Impurity of the Creature; the Simplicity of God and the Multiplicity of Man, 'tis needful that God do singularly operate. For this can never be done by the Effort of the Creature,

(*m*) Rev. 8. 1.

ſince two things cannot be united which have no relation or congruity, and betwixt which there intercedeth no Likeneſs; even as an impure Metal will never join it ſelf fully with the moſt pure and refin'd Gold.

What doth God then do? He ſendeth before Him his own *Wiſdom*, even as the Fire ſhall be ſent upon the Earth, to conſume by its Activity whatſoever is of Impure therein. The Fire conſumeth all things, and nothing reſiſteth its Activity. It is the ſame with *Wiſdom*; it conſumeth every Impurity in the Creature, to diſpoſe it for the Divine Union.

This Impurity, which is ſo oppoſite to Union, is Propriety and Activity. *Propriety*, becauſe it is the Source of real Impurity, which can never be allied to the Eſſential Purity: even as the Raies of the Sun may indeed touch the Dirt, but cannot unite with it. *Activity*, becauſe God being in an Infinite Reſt, 'tis neceſſary, in order to the Souls being made capable to be united with Him, that it do participate of his Reſt; without which He cannot have any Union with it, by reaſon

of the Unlikeneſs: ſince that two things may be united, 'tis required that they be in a proportionate Reſt.

And it is for this reaſon that the Soul arriveth not to the Divine Union, but by the Reſt of its Will; and it cannot be united unto God, but it muſt be in a Central Reſt, and in the Purity of its Creation. To purifie the Soul, God maketh uſe of *Wiſdom*; as they make uſe of Fire to purifie Gold. 'Tis certain that Gold cannot be purified but by the Fire, which conſumes by little and little all that's Terreſtrial and Heterogeneous therein, and ſeparates it from the Gold. It is not enough for the Gold, in order to be made uſe of by the Goldſmith, that the Earthy part be converted into Gold: 'tis neceſſary moreover that the Fire do melt it, for to draw out of its Subſtance whatever remains in it that is Heterogeneous and Earthly; and this Gold is caſt ſo many times into the Fire, until it loſeth all Impurity, and every Diſpoſition that's left to be purified.

The Goldſmith not being able to find any more of Mixture, by reaſon tha

that the Gold is come to its perfect Purity and Simplicity, the Fire cannot act more upon it; and it might be there an Age, without ever being made thereby more pure, and without any diminution in the leaſt of its ſubſtance. Then it is fit for one to make of it the moſt excellent Works; and if this Gold is impure at any time afterwards, I ſay that theſe are Defilements newly contracted thro' the Commerce and nearneſs of foreign Bodies. But there is this difference herein to be obſerved, that this Impurity is meerly ſuperficial, and doth not hinder it from being made uſe of in Work: whereas the other Impurity was hidden in the Centre or Ground, and as 'twere identified with its Nature. Nevertheleſs Perſons who are not acquainted with this, ſeeing a piece of Gold that's truly refin'd, cover'd outwardly over with Filth, would not value it ſo much, as they would do a piece of courſe Gold that's very impure, when its outſide is poliſh'd.

Moreover, you may obſerve how that Gold of an inferiour degree of Purity, cannot be allied with that of a ſuperiour degree of Purity: there's a

Neceſſity for the one, to contract off the Impurity of the other, or for this to partake of the Purity of that. To mix fine Gold with courſe, is what the Goldſmith will never do. What will he then do? He will cauſe all the Earthly Mixture of this Gold to be deſtroyed, by the Fire, to the end he may be able to ally it with the Purity of the firſt. And this is it that St. *Paul* ſaith, (*n*) namely; *that our Works ſhall be tried as by Fire, that what is combuſtible may be burnt.* He addeth, that *the Perſon whoſe Works ſhall be found fit to be burnt, ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by Fire.* The meaning is, that there are certain Works which are accepted and approved; but to the end that he who hath wrought them may be alſo pure, it is needful that they paſs through the Fire, that ſo the Propriety may be taken from them: and 'tis in this ſame Senſe that *God* will examine and *judge our Righteouſneſſes* (*o*) Becauſe *Man ſhall never be ſanctified by the Works of the Law, but by the Righteouſneſs of the Faith which cometh of God.* (*p*)

(*n*) 1 *Cor.* 3.13,15. (*o*) *Pſ.* 75.2. vulg. (*p*) *Rom.* 3.20

This

This being once laid down, I ſay, that to the end Man may be united to his *God*, there's a Neceſſity that his *Wiſdom*, accompanied with the Divine Juſtice as a pitileſs and devouring Fire, do take away from the Soul all whatever it hath of Propriety, of Earthly, of Carnal, and of Self-Activity; and that having taken from the Soul all this, he may unite himſelf to it. Which is a thing that can never be done by the Induſtry of the Creature: on the contrary, the Creature ſuffereth it even with Regret: becauſe, as I have ſaid, Man loveth ſo mightily his Propriety, and feareth ſo much his Deſtruction, that if God did not do it himſelf, and with Authority, Man would never conſent to it.

To this it may be anſwered me, that God never taketh from Man his Liberty, and that thus he can always reſiſt God: whence it followeth, that I ought not to ſay, that God acteth abſolutely, and without the Conſent of Man.

I explain my ſelf and ſay, that it ſufficeth then that Man give a paſſive Conſent, to the end he may have an en-

tire and full Liberty; because that being given up to God from the Beginning of the Way, that God might do with him and in him whatever he would, he gave then an Active and General Consent to whatever *God* should do. But when *God* destroyeth, burneth, and purifieth, the Soul seeth not that this is advantageous to it, it believeth rather the contrary; and even as the Fire seemeth at first to soil the Gold, so this Operation seemeth to rob the Soul of its Purity. So that if an active and explicit Consent were then needful, the Soul would have Difficulty to give it, and very often it would not give it at all. All that the Soul doth, is to keep it self in a passive Consent, suffering as well as it can this Operation, which it neither *can* nor *will* hinder.

God therefore purifieth in such wise the Soul from all proper, distinct, perceptible, and multiplied Operations, which cause indeed a very great Unlikeness, that at last he renders it by little and little, conformable to himself; and then uniform, by exalting the passive Capacity of the Creature, en-

enlarging it, and enobling it, though after an hidden and unknown manner, which therefore is hence called *Myſtical.* But 'tis neceſſary that in all theſe Operations the Soul do concur paſſively. It is true, that before it cometh to this, there's need that it be more active in the Beginning; and then, according as the Divine Operation groweth ſtronger, the Soul muſt gradually and ſucceſſively yeild and give way unto God, until that it be perfectly abſorpt of him. But this endureth a long while

We don't then ſay (as ſome have believed) that there is no need to paſs through Action; ſince, on the contrary, this is the Gate: but only that one muſt not always reſt and abide in it; ſeeing Man ought to tend to the Perfection of his end, and he can never arrive thither but in quitting the firſt Helps and Means; which, tho' they were neceſſary for him to introduce him into this Way, would greatly hurt him in the Progreſs of it, if he ſhould obſtinately cleave to them; ſeeing they would hinder him from arriving at his End. This is what St.

Paul

Paul did: *I leave* (saith he) (q) *that which is behind, and I endeavour to advance forward, that so I may finish my Course.*

Would not they say, that a Person had lost his Senses, if having undertaken a Journey he should stop at the first Inn, because he was certainly informed that several have pass'd that way, that some have lodg'd there, and that the Masters of the House do dwell there? All that we wish for then from Souls is, that they go on still towards their End; that they take the shortest and the easiest way; that they stop not at the first place they come to; and that following the Counsel of St. *Paul*, they leave themselves to be moved and led by the Spirit of Grace, who will conduct them to the End for which they were created, which is, to enjoy *God*.

'Tis a strange thing that they who own, that we are created for no other End but this, and also that every Soul which reacheth not in this Life to the Divine Union, and to the Purity of its Creation, is to suffer a good while in Purgatory for the Acquirement of this Purity,

(q) *Phil.* 3. 14.

rity, ſhould nevertheleſs not be willing to ſuffer that God ſhould lead them unto it in this Life-time: as if that which is to make the Perfection of Glory, could be the cauſe of Evil and of Imperfection in this mortal Life.

None can be ignorant, that the Sovereign Good is *God*; that Eſſential Beatitude conſiſteth in the Union with *God*; that the Saints are more or leſs glorified, according as this Union is more or leſs perfect, and that this Union cannot be made in the Soul by any Activity of its own, ſince that God communicates not himſelf to the Soul, but in ſo far as its Paſſive Capacity is Great, Noble, and Enlarged. One cannot be united to God without Paſſiveneſs, and without Simplicity; and this Union being Beatitude it ſelf, the way or Method which guideth us into this Paſſiveneſs cannot be Evil; on the contrary, it is the beſt of all; and there is no Danger at all to walk in it.

This Way is no wiſe dangerous; if it were, would *Jeſus Chriſt* have made it the moſt perfect and the moſt neceſſary of all Ways? All can walk in it;

and

and as all are called to Blessedness, all are also called to enjoy God both in this Life and in the next; forasmuch as the *Enjoyment of God* doth constitute our Blessedness or Happiness. I say, of *God himself*, and not of his Gifts, which could never be able to make the Essential Blessedness, being quite incapable to give a full Contentment to the Soul. For the Soul is so Noble and so Great, that all the Gifts of God, even the very highest and greatest, could not render it Happy, if God give not himself unto it. Now God's whole Desire is to give himself unto his Creature, according to the Capacity which he hath placed in it: and yet, alas! Men are afraid to let themselves go unto God! They are afraid to possess him, and to prepare themselves for the Divine Union.

Some say, that none ought to put themselves into it of themselves. I grant it. But I say also, that no Creature can ever do this, since there is no a Creature in the World that is able to unite it self to God by all its own Efforts, and since it must be *God* that must unite it to himself. If therefore

one cannot be united to *God* by ones ſelf, it is to cry out againſt a Chimera, to cry out againſt them who put themſelves into it of themſelves.

Theſe will ſay, that ſome do feign themſelves to be in it. I ſay that this cannot be feigned; for he who dieth of Hunger cannot feign, eſpecially for a long time, that he is in perfect Fulneſs. There will eſcape from him always ſome Deſire, or Longing, by which he will ſoon diſcover that he is very far from his End.

Since therefore no Man can enter into his End, except he be placed therein, our Concern here is not to introduce any one into it, but to ſhew them the Way which leadeth thither; and at the ſame time to beſeech and conjure them, that they would not keep themſelves tied up, and fixed to any *Inns* or Exerciſes, which muſt be quitted when the Signal is given; the which is known by the experienced Director, who ſheweth the Living Water, and endeavoureth to introduce into it. And would it not be a Cruelty that deſerves to be puniſhed, to ſhew a Spring to a thirſty Man, but then to keep him bound,

bound, and to hinder him from going to it, so leaving him to die with Thirst? Yet this is what is done at this Day. Let us all agree in the Way, as we agree in the End, whereof none can doubt without Errour. The Way hath its Beginning, its Progress, and its End or Mark. The more one advanceth towards the Mark, the more of necessity he departeth from the Beginning: and it is impossible to arrive at the Mark or End, but by departing continually farther from the Beginning, no one being able to go from a Gate to a distant place without passing through the Middle. This is inconteſtable. If the End be good, holy, and necessary, and if the Gate be good, why shall the Way which cometh from this Gate, and leadeth directly to this End, be evil? O the Blindness of the greatest part of Men, who value themselves for their Learning and Wit! O how true is it, my *God*, that *Thou hast hidden thy Secrets from the Great and from the Wise, to Reveal them to the Little Ones!*

THE

THE LETTER

Of the Reverend Father John Falconi,

To a Religious Woman:

Wherein he teacheth her the pureſt and moſt perfect Spirit of *Prayer.*

My Dear Daughter in Jeſus Chriſt,

May God always be with you, and fill you with himſelf, and with his Gifts!

I Have conſidered what you told me concerning the State of your Soul: I have ſeen the Degree in which it is, and do perceive, that in order to advance it more and more to Perfection, it muſt be leſs engag'd than ordinary in

in ſenſible Operations. It muſt need withdraw it ſelf from every thing tha hath any Relation to the bodily Pow ers and Senſes: and to this end, be hold the Manner of Prayer which here counſel you to follow.

Fix your ſelf well in the Preſence o *God*: and as it is a Truth of our Holy Faith, that his Divine Majeſty filleth all with his Eſſence, with his Preſence and with his Power, make an interna Act of this Faith, and perſwade you ſelf ſtrongly of this important Truth Give up your ſelf entirely into hi Fatherly Hands: Reſign your Soul your Life, your inward and outward Man to his moſt Holy Will, that h may diſpoſe of you according to hi good Pleaſure, and for his Service, i time and in Eternity.

This being done, remain in Peac in Reſt, and in Silence; as one wh diſpoſeth no more of any thing wha ſoever: think not willingly on an thing, how good and how ſublime ſ ever it may be; and tie not your ſe to any thing, but to abide in the pu Faith of *God* in general, and in t Reſignation that you have made of yo ſelf to his Holy Will.

Beware of thinking that this State is a State of Idleneſs, becauſe in truth it is not ſo: on the contrary, the Soul is here better employed than ever, foraſmuch as it operates all that I am going to tell you, though indeed it perceives not that it doth.

Know therefore, that the Soul then exerciſeth in a moſt excellent manner the three Divine Virtues, namely, *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*. *Faith*, becauſe it believeth God preſent. *Hope*, becauſe it expecteth from him an Infinity of Graces, which he is willing to communicate unto it, and that it would not for any thing in the World remain in this State if it did not hope for ſomething from him. *Charity*, becauſe it loveth its God ardently, is wholly reſign'd unto him, and deſireth only what pleaſeth him; which is without all doubt, a perpetual Act of Love.

Here you do an Act of *Juſtice*, which conſiſts in giving to every one what belongs to him; and ſeeing that you are wholly God's, by Reaſon of the Gift which you have made of your ſelf unto him, you have no more any Right to diſpoſe of your ſelf otherwiſe.

You do an Act of *Prudence*, which cannot be greater, in the little Esteem that you have of your own Will, than to resign your self entirely to the Providence of *God*, that he may do in you whatsoever pleaseth him.

You do an Act of *Fortitude*, since that without losing your Courage you persevere, and that without desponding, you often suffer the Pains and Conflicts of Temptations, of Aridities, and of troublesome Thoughts, which fail not then to persecute you more cruelly. And even in that you do a great Act of *Patience*, because you endure all these Troubles in the View of the Will of *God*.

But that which is most eminently exercised in this State, is *Humility*; seeing that while one hath no sensible Perception of what he doth, but, on the contrary, thinks he doth nothing at all, not being able to see what he doth, that Person humbleth himself most deeply: he confesseth that he is not good for any thing, and that whatsoever he hath that's good cometh only from God, without any thing of Merit on his own part to receive it.

More

Moreover, you render by this means moſt worthy Praiſes to the Greatneſs of your God; ſeeing as St. *Hierom* ſaith, the true manner of Praiſing aright this Sovereign Majeſty is to keep Silence before him, making all your Praiſes to ceaſe, and confeſſing that you are not worthy to praiſe ſo great a Lord, or to converſe with him.

You do alſo an Act of *Liberality*, and another of *Magnanimity*, ſince you give to God whatever you have that's beſt or moſt valuable, that is to ſay, your very Soul, and your Will entirely and without reſerve.

In fine, you perform almoſt all the Virtues, which I do not explain further, becauſe I have not Words ſufficient to expreſs the great Advantages that are contain'd in this humble, pure, and true Manner of Praying in Silence and Reſignation. This is that which the Divine Maſter taught us in the Garden, where, for the ſpace of three Hours that he prayed in it, his whole Prayer was only that of Reſignation to the Will of his Father; and there being in this State, he ſuffered that the ſame Father was pleaſed

to inflict upon him, even to the feelin
the Rigours of the Agony and th
Crosſ.

Behold, my Dear Daughter, Th
is what you have to imitate in cruc
fying your ſelf with his Divine Ma
jeſty, that you may not live any mo
in your ſelf, but in the moſt pure Wi
of our Lord; whom I bleſs, and who
I beſeech to make you to underſta
thoſe Truths, thro' the Merits of h
Paſſion and of his Death.

From all the Virtues that I ha
ſpoke of, and which are practis'd
this manner of Prayer, tho' the Soul
not ſenſible of what it doth, it com
to paſs that it is advanced unto, a
even eſtabliſh'd in a moſt living *Fai*
without knowing how it hath receiv
ſo many good things. The Soul is fil
with a firm *Hope*, with an ardent C
rity, and with all the other Virt
which proceed from theſe three pr
cipal ones, which at the beginn
you exerciſe in your Prayer; ſince
cording to St. *Gregory*, the three Th
logical Virtues are the Springs
Sources of the true Perfection of a S
and as in Heaven the eternal Life

he Blessed is entertain'd by the Know-
edge which they have of the Three
Divine Persons; even so in this World,
he Spiritual Life of Souls is sustain'd
y the Internal Exercise of those Three
reat Virtues.

But that you may attend to this *Prayer* more purely and more spiritually, take good heed in doing what I have advised you, that you be not then aken up in considering that *God* is resent in your Soul and in your Heart; r altho' this be a good thing, nevertheless it were but to imagine God in limited manner; it were not to be-ve him simply enough; and it were some sort injurious to his infinite reatness, to regard it as shut up in y place whatever, since it filleth all ings.

Neither disturb your self with think-g on the manner how God is present the Place where you are, as some rsons do, who spend all the time their Prayer in repeating these ords in their Mind; namely, Lord, ou art here: I believe, my God, that ou art present here.

Again,

Again, don't entangle your self about enquiring whether you are recollected, or whether your Prayer goeth well or ill: do not amuse your self to reflect on what you do, or to think whether you put in Practice or no the Virtues which I have hinted, or the like. This were but to occupy your Mind about these mean Considerations, and to break the thread of perfect Prayer. It were just as if a Man who reads or studies, should be continually Reflecting on what he is a doing, and be taken up only in thinking that now he reads, and in desiring to examine every Moment whether he reads. This were doubtless to take one off from his principal end; because at the bottom we ought not to enter into Prayer but to the end that God may make of us what pleaseth him, and that he may operate in our Soul whatsoever shall be most advantageous to it. Every other Internal Exercise would but serve to disturb this Divine Operation; a Painter could never succeed well in drawing the Picture of a Person that were always moving. Thus therefore when you find your self in this Spi-

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tual Repoſe, what good Thought or what Reflection ſoever you may form, it will but diſtract you, and hinder that God do not operate in your Soul the Graces and Mercies which he is willing to ſhew you.

Bleſſed be his Name for ever, that He is ſo willing to carry us himſelf whither our Weakneſs and Negligence could never arrive! So that when the Soul hath once put it ſelf into the hands of this Almighty Lord, 'tis no more needful that it remember it ſelf. To this purpoſe St. *Auſtin* ſaith in his Confeſſions;* *Let all Imaginations ceaſe; let the Heavens be ſtill: yea, let the Soul keep in it ſelf a profound Silence; and let it reſign it ſelf entirely to God, as if it did not think any more of it ſelf at all.* And the bleſſed *Peter of Alcantara*, [a familiar Friend of S. *Thereſa*] in the eighth Advice which he gives concerning Prayer, ſaith, *That the Perſon which prays ought to forget himſelf and all that he doth; becauſe, as ſaid one of the ancient Fathers, perfect Prayer is that wherein he who prays, doth not remember*

* Lib. 9. cap. 10.

that he is actually in Prayer.

Lose therefore the very Memory of your self; sink your self down into the naked and obscure Faith of *the Divinity*: you shall never be in greater Safety, and never make greater Advantage, than when it would seem that you are lost and annihilated in this Depth. Perhaps you do not know after what manner this Loss happeneth to the Soul. I must therefore explain it to you by a Comparison, which, tho' it be natural enough, is yet very much short of the Truth of the Thing.

Put the Case that you have caught a small Fish in the Sea, and that then you put it in a Vessel full of Water where you take pleasure to see it swim: here the poor Fish is always in Danger of being retaken, of being wounded and abused; but if you cast it into the Sea, where it is immediately swallowed up and taken out of your Sight, will you say for all this that it is lost? and is it not in greater Safety now than when you kept it more narrowly shut up?

Thus it is with you when you are

caſt away, and drowned, as you think, in the obſcure Faith of *God:* you will apprehend, it may be, according to your manner of thinking, that you are loſt; and in the mean time you ſhall never be in a Condition of making greater Spiritual Progreſs; you ſhall never be in more Safety, never more remote from all Danger, and from all the Deluſions of the Devil. There being no ſuch thing in this profound *Nothing*, the Tempter cannot enter into it; and your Soul was never better employ'd than now that it hath loſt the Stay and Support of it ſelf, and that all Diſquiet, all Reflection, and all the ſenſible part is deſtroy'd. In this ſtate of pure Faith, and without the Mixture of any created thing, the Underſtanding believeth in *God*, and the Will loveth him with a Viceneſs of Spirit, which does not entangle it with Natural Affections, to which 'tis peculiarly proper to fully the Purity of the Spiritual Love.

This manner of Praying, with a perfect Surrender and Reſignation of all that's ſenſible, is a Paradice upon Earth. Hence it is that S. *Auſtin* in the fore-

cited Place ſaith further, *that if this Contemplation were of Continuance, it ſhould be the ſame almoſt with that which the Saints do enjoy in Heaven. Yea verily,* (ſaith he) *if it were continual, it ſhould be as if one had entred into the full Enjoyment of God.* O but this illuminated Doctor ſaith true! For there's no difference betwixt the Contemplation upon Earth and that in Heaven, but in this, that in Heaven we ſee God Face to Face; and here below we behold Him under the Vail of Faith.

But as to this Doctrine of S. *Auſtin* I muſt give you an Advice, to the end that this Prayer may always become more and more perfect in you. This is ſuppoſing that the Contemplation is more excellent, and the Love more pure, when there's leaſt of the ſenſible in them; and that both the one and the other are more laſting in the ſame continued Act than in ſeveral different ones; it plainly follows, that the best Prayer and the moſt ardent Love ought to reſemble thoſe that are practis'd in Heaven; where, as S. *Thomas* teacheth there is but one continued Act of Contemplation and Love.

I wiſh therefore that all your Days, all your Months, all your Years, nay, your whole Life, were entirely employ'd in a continual Act of Contemplation, with the moſt ſimple Faith and the pureſt Love that were poſſible. So that after you have once reſigned your ſelf wholly to the Divine Will, and that you have once placed your ſelf in the Faith of God's being preſent in all things; endeavour to continue this Act, and to preſerve your ſelf in it without ceaſing. Though you ſhould employ many Hours in this Prayer, tho' you ſhould paſs whole Nights in it, even to the break of the Day, do not entangle your ſelf with new Acts, but ſtill continue that of Faith and Love, which you made at the beginning, when you totally gave up your ſelf into the Hands of our Lord.

In this Diſpoſition, whenſoever you ſhall enter into Prayer, it will not always be neceſſary to give your ſelf to God a new, ſince that you have done it already. For as if you gave a Diamond-ring to your dear Friend, after having put it in his Hands, it were not handſome to tell him and

repeat it unto him every Day, that you give him this Ring, and make him a Present of it; you need only to leave it with him without taking it back again, because that so long as you do not take it from him, nor yet have the desire to do it, it is always true, to say that you have made him this Present, and that you do not recal it. Thus when once you have absolutely put your self into the Hands of our Lord by an amorous Surrender, you need only to abide there. Keep your self carefully from Disquiet, and from using any Efforts, which tend to make new Acts; and trouble not your self so much about redoubling your sensible Affections: they do nothing but interrupt the pure Simplicity of the Spiritual Act which your Will produceth.

That which is most important of all is, never to take away from God what you have given Him, by doing any thing notorious against His Divine Pleasure. For provided that this happeneth not, the Essence and Continuance of your Resignation, and of your Conformity to the Will of God lasteth still; forasmuch as the light faults

faults which one committeth without thinking enough on 'em, do not deſtroy the eſſential Point of this Conformity.

I own there are but few Perſons that arrive at this State of ſo great and ſo continu'd a Faith, by one and the ſame Act of purely Spiritual Love. But I diſcover unto you my Deſire, wiſhing that all the World did endeavour to know whence it comes that Men do not continue in this manner of Prayer. The reaſon is plainly this, becauſe many apprehend, that the Exerciſes of the humane Life do interrupt this Act of continued Love; therefore they force themſelves to form new and ſenſible Acts, that they may certainly know and feel what they do. Yet it is certain, that whatſoever is not contrary to the Will of God, doth not break or diſturb ones Reſignation and Conformity to that Divine Will. O but that great and Spiritual Man, the famous *Gregory Lopez* excellently underſtood this Purity of Spirit! His Life was a perpetual Prayer, and a continual Act of Contemplation and Love of his God and his Neighbour:

and this Act was in him so pure, so spiritual, and in a Word so dry, and so reserved from giving any thing to the sensible part, that he seemed rather to be a Seraphin in a Body, than a Man like others. He said, he would not give the least Bit to Nature, but he kept the Inward Man so separated from the Outward, that he would not in any thing whatever have any Commerce with the Senses at all. And after that he had arrived at this continual Act of Faith, Resignation and Love, he did not allow himself so much as a Groan, or an ejaculatory Prayer, nor any thing whatsoever that's sensible. Here it is, my Daughter, whither I would gladly see you arrived: and this Servant of God possess'd this Virtue in so eminent a Degree, that his Companion, the Licentiate *Loza*, sighing one Day while he walked with him, and letting go an Alas! He said unto him, one must give some little Morsel to Nature to eat, least it should die of Hunger.

I was willing moreover to discover unto you the Secret of this spiritual and continual Manner of Prayer, to the end you

you may advance in this way, and that you may dis-engage your ſelf by little and little of the ſenſible Movements of repeated Acts, and of voluntary Reflection in Prayer, aſſuring you, that if you get clear of all theſe things, you ſhall aſcend to the higheſt Pitch of the Spirit. Again, I have told you this to give you to underſtand, that if at any time, whether in Prayer or out of Prayer, you feel any Sweetneſſes, or any Tenderneſſes of Affections, you may know that it is not in theſe that the Purity of Spirit conſiſteth. This is but a mixed Act of the Senſibilities of Nature, which bringeth not along with it any certainty of the Love of God. It is only a Reliſh of the Internal Senſe which in this Moment takes pleaſure in what it doth or feeleth.

To explain what I ſay a little further, I ſhall make uſe of the Words of the Great Contemplative *Richard of S. Victor*, who in his Treatiſe on the Canticles ſpeaks in this manner; 'The 'Tenderneſs and Sweetneſs which one 'feels in the things of God, is in ſome reſpect carnal. One may eaſily be deceived in it, for it is often an Ef-

'fect rather of Humanity than of 'Grace; it proceeds rather from the 'Body than from the Heart; and 'rather from the Senſes, than from 'the Spirit and from Reaſon. So 'that at ſome times one cleaves rather 'to a leſſer Good, becauſe it is Savoury, 'than to a greater and more profitable, 'becauſe it is leſs agreable.

'It was with the like Tenderneſs 'that the Diſciples loved and prayed 'to God Incarnate while he lived in 'the World; they were unwilling to 'be ſeparated from his Perſon, but in 'this they did not love him purely, 'and they acted more by the Motive 'of their Pleaſure than of their Duty. 'Thus (continues *Richard*) a ſenſual 'and imperfect Man may believe that 'he loves *God*, not becauſe he loveth 'him much, but becauſe he feeleth 'the Sweetneſs of his Grace; but the 'true Friend is known, not at the 'time when he receives Favours and 'Benefits, but when he is overwhelm'd 'with Temptations and Preſſures.

You may judge from hence how many Spiritual Perſons do deceive themſelves in their Sweetneſſes and tender

tender Recollections, imagining that what they feel is the delicate and pure Love of *God*, though it be very often but a true Self-love.

But I don't at all wonder at this, ſince that the Diſciples themſelves, who were nurs'd at the very Breaſts of the Doctrine of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and trained under ſo great a Maſter, could not rid themſelves of this ſweet and ſenſible Love, 'tis no marvel that the Spiritual Perſons of our Age do not arrive ſo eaſily at this ſtate. But let us return our moſt humble Thanks to ſo good a Maſter, who hath taught both them and us to forſake all things, that we may follow Him in Truth, in a State of perpetual Suffering even to the Death of the Croſs. Love this then dearly my Daughter. Learn well that Leſſon of this excellent Maſter. Forget altogether your ſelf: empty your ſelf of every thing that is yours, that God may fill you with himſelf. Seeing, as 'twas ſaid by the Fathers in the time of *Caſſian*, *where ſelf is not, there it is exactly that God is to be found.*

Madrid July 28. 1628.

An

An Advice *to the same purpose, given by* S. Fr. *of* Sales, *to the* M. *of* Chantal, *very profitable for the* Interiour Life ; [*exactly conformable to the Sentiments of the profound* Jo. à Cruce.]

TO know, when one cannot act interiourly, whether it be that *God* attracteth the Soul to Simplicity and a quiet Attention in his Presence, there are three Marks.

The First is, if one finds that he cannot any more meditate, and that he hath no more Relish in Meditation as formerly ; but on the contrary, he finds Aridity therein.

The Second is, when the Heart sees that it hath no more Desire to fix its Imagination or Senses on any particular thing either Inward or Outward.

The Third and most certain is, if your Soul take Pleasure to be alone with an amorous Attention to *God*, without any particular Consideration, in in-

ward

ward Peace; which is a Repoſe without any Act or Exerciſe of the Faculties, as the Memory, the Underſtanding and Will; or at leaſt without Diſcourſe or Ratiocination, which is to go from one thing to another: but only to ſtand in an amorous Attention and general Regard.

One muſt have theſe Marks in himſelf before he can leave Meditation: and though the Soul ſeemeth not to do any thing in this Attention, nor to be employed about any thing, becauſe it doth not operate with the Senſes; let it not think it is loſt, or that it is unprofitable: for altho' the Faculties of the Soul do ceaſe, the Underſtanding remains; and ſo let it ſuffice you in the Caſe we ſpeak of, to conſider, that it is enough that the Underſtanding be abſtracted from all particular things, whether Spiritual or Temporal, and that the Will have no Deſire to think either on the one or the other: this is to be underſtood when the Occupation is only in your Intellect; for when it is communicated to the Will in Conjunction, (which happens almoſt always leſs or more) then the Soul ceaſes

not

not to underſtand, if it will but take Notice, that it is employed; in as much as it feels its ſelf ſeiz'd with Love, without knowing or underſtanding what it loves.

In this State God is the particular Agent, who prepares and teaches; and the Soul is that which receives the moſt ſpiritual Goods which he giveth it, theſe are an Attention and Divine Love both together. Then the Soul ought to proceed only with an amorous Regard to *God*, without particularizing any other Acts but thoſe which it feels it ſelf inclined to by him; remaining as 'twere penſive in it ſelf, without uſing any other Diligence or Effort, preſerving only this amorous, ſimple, and ſincere Regard; like one that ſhould open his Eyes with a Glance of Love: ſince that God treateth then with the Soul in the manner of giving, with a ſimple and amorous Attention; and the Soul treateth alſo with him in the way of receiving, with a ſimple and amorous Regard and Knowledge, thus to conjoyn Love with Love.

But if the Soul will act from it ſelf or its own Motion, behaving in any other manner than in an amorous and moſt ſimple Attention, peaceably and without Ratiocination; it will hinder the good things which God communicateth to it in this loving Attention. It follows therefore that your Soul ought to be very much diſentangled, calm, and ſerene, after the manner of God; for this requires a Spirit ſo free and annihilated, that what thing ſoever the Soul would then do, as to any particular Thought, or reaſoning, as to any Sweetneſs or Reliſh it would fix upon, that would hinder and diſquiet it, and cauſe ſome Noiſe in the profound Silence, which ought to be in the Soul, both as to Senſe and Spirit, that it may hear this profound and ſtill Word which God ſpeaks to the Heart in this Solitude, hearkning in a profound Peace and Tranquility, wherein the Soul ſhould hear what God ſpeaks, ſo long as this Peace laſteth in it.

When therefore it happens that the Soul ſhall feel it ſelf drawn into Silence and Liſtening, the amorous Regard

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ought to be most simple, without Care or Reflection; so that it should forget almost it self that it may be wholly attentive, to the end it may thus remain free to do what God requires of it.

But observe, that how soon the Soul begins to enter into the simple and passive State, it ought never at any time or season to employ it self in Meditations, nor to wait for Spiritual Favours and Sights. But on the contrary, to stand altogether attentive and watchful, keeping the Spirit free from every Support that it might lean upon, according to the Resolution of *Habakkuk* (*) *I will stand upon my Watch, to guard my Senses, leaving them below; I will keep my Gate firm upon the Munition of my Faculties; not suffering them to think the least Thought of themselves: I will watch to contemplate what shall be spoken in me: I will receive what shall be communicated to me in Stilness and in Peace.* For indeed it is impossible that this most high *Wisdom* can be received, but by a Spirit that's ab-

(*) Cap. 2. 1.

stracted

ſtracted and diſengaged from all particular Reliſhes, Taſtes, and Satisfactions.

Set therefore your Soul at Liberty, in the calm Peace; wean it from the Reliſh and Servitude of its own Operation; do not diſturb it with any Care or Solicitude about any thing whether above or beneath; reduceing it thus into Solitude: for the ſooner that it ſhall come to this Inactive Leiſure and Quiet, with ſo much the greater abundance ſhall be infuſed into it the Spirit of Divine *Wiſdom*; that Wiſdom which is pure, peaceable, affectionate, calm, ſweet and Solitary: and that little which God operates in the Soul, in this Holy Leiſure and Solitude, is an unvaluable good, more than you can ever think on. God buildeth in every Soul a Supernatural Edifice according as it pleaſeth him.

Mortifie your Nature, and annihilate its Operations in every thing that may oppoſe the Deſigns of God, for this is your Duty; his Intention being to lead you to the ſupernatural Good by Ways and Means which you cannot know. In the Leiſure and Calm of the Mind,

Mind, the Affection openeth and enlargeth it self, as it is expedient; and then we feel the Touches and Drawings of the Divine Love much more piercing: Care shutteth up and entangleth the Spirit, Repose or Tranquility disentangleth it: it will be necessary then that all the natural and humane Affection of the Soul, after an unspeakable manner, be quite dissolved and melted in it self, and launch out entirely into the Will of God; for otherwise, how should God be all in all, if any thing remained [alive] in the Soul of Man.

As the Divine Wisdom, to which the Understanding ought to be united, is not confin'd to any particular Ways or Means, since it falleth not under any limited or distinct Intelligence whatsoever; and as in order to joyn the Soul in perfect Union with this Divine Wisdom, it is needful that they do mutually agree in certain Means of Likeness and Similitude: hence it cometh that the Soul ought to be pure and simple so far as it can, not limited, nor modified with any expres Bounds or Images, seeing God is not compre-

hended

nended under theſe: thus the Soul, that it may be united to God, muſt not have any diſtinct Form or Intelligence.

The Perfection of the *Memory* is, to be ſo ſwallowed up in God, that the Soul may forget all things in it ſelf, and repoſe ſweetly in God alone, far from all the Noiſe of Thoughts and vain Imaginations. The more we do empty the Memory of Forms or Idea's, or any thing notable, that is not either *Divinity*, or the *Divine Humanity*, the Remembrance whereof leadeth always to the end, being that which is the true Way, the Guide and the Author of all Good; ſo much the more ſhall we fix the Memory in God, and keep it empty, hoping that he will fill it.

That therefore which we ought to do, that we may live in a pure and entire Hope of God, is this, namely, that as often as any diſtinct Forms or Images ſhall preſent themſelves unto us, without ſtopping at them we turn the Soul ſuddenly to God, empty, and always with an amorous Affection; not ſo much as thinking or looking on theſe things, but in ſo far as the Remembrance

brance of 'em will serve to make us know and do what we are obliged to perform; and even this without tasting or loving them, least they leave some Snare or Disturbance in the Soul. And so you need not forbear to think and remember what you have to do, or what you ought to know, provided it be done without Adhesion.

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